

enjoyed by the peoples of the world, and in particular this great dominion of ours, for many years to come.

Mr. HARRY LEADER (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is quite some time since I offered any contribution to a debate, nor would I do so at the present time if it were not for the fact that I desire to bring to the house and members who are kind enough to listen to me the point of view of the people whom I serve. A number of meetings have been held recently in my city of Portage la Prairie, attended mostly by the farm population, in which the points of view of the people as to certain problems were expressed, and I promised to bring it to the attention of the house.

First of all you will be interested, sir, to know that the majority of people in my riding are satisfied that the war effort carried on by the government and the people of Canada as a whole is creditable. It is true, as they say, that some mistakes have been made, but mistakes are inevitable in any undertaking carried on on such a colossal scale.

I had the privilege of sitting in on a committee, or committees, if you like, just before leaving Portage la Prairie. I believe they are called local advisory committees, and they are being set up by the government to advise those in authority with regard to post-war measures. I think that in this innovation, because after all it is an innovation, we are now getting close to the people, where we belong. In looking over the members of that committee I could not help thinking that they were representative of nearly every organization in our constituency, leading men, good men who desire to do all in their power to help this government or any other government to formulate policies that will be for the benefit of the Dominion of Canada.

I said that some meetings were held and some resolutions were passed, and that is my main reason for rising to-day. One of the resolutions passed, which had the support of the war veterans of our city and district and of the legion, was in protest against the military exemption which is granted to certain denominations sometimes referred to as religious in this country. They know that the Mennonites were exempted from military service by order in council in 1873. They know also that the Doukhobors had a similar arrangement in 1898. We have also a class of settlers in our district whom we call the Hutterites. They have a longer name but I cannot remember their exact title. These people are excellent farmers and efficient producers but they settle in colonies and are declared to be no asset to the district. I am

not expressing that as my opinion; it is the opinion that is prevalent among the neighbours who farm adjacent to the land occupied by the sects to which I have referred.

This matter was discussed at the meeting and I suggested that the law which granted these people military exemption should be repealed. I told the meeting that if they would pass a resolution I should be glad to present it in the house. I can look back to a speech—it was very short—which I made on one occasion with regard to the Mennonites, in answer to a speech which had been delivered by the Minister of Agriculture, who told the house that the Mennonites did not want to shoulder a rifle and kill but that they had offered their services in any other capacity in our war effort. I could not allow the occasion to go by without expressing my gratitude and satisfaction that these people were willing to do what they could in regard to our war effort. Of course, I was speaking generally and I presume the Minister of Agriculture was also. But there are others who do not offer any help, and this resolution was passed on that account.

I have the resolution here, and out of courtesy to the meeting which passed it at Portage la Prairie, I will put it on *Hansard*:

Whereas owing to the enlistment and call up of farmers' sons for military service, land which they formerly assisted in operating is now available for sale or rent.

And whereas the Militia Act, passed in 1868, grants protection from military service to persons of certain religious denominations, who take advantage of this situation by the purchase or lease of said lands.

And whereas conditions have greatly changed since said act was passed, and the action of said persons is resented by many Canadians, and is causing disunity and unrest, and if said protection is to remain in force be it resolved that parliament be urged to take the necessary action to prohibit such exempted persons or sects from purchasing or leasing farm land, without the consent of the municipal commissioner and the council of the rural municipality in which said land is situate, so that the returned men may have an opportunity to buy or lease, if they wish to do so.

I will also put on the record a similar resolution passed at the annual meeting of the union of Manitoba municipalities dealing with the same subject. This is resolution number 27:

Whereas there is information that certain aliens, conscientious objectors and others, who are not supporting the war effort or contributing toward the winning of this war by serving in the armed forces or buying bonds, or in any other way, are purchasing some of the best farm lands for themselves and families;

And whereas after the war a great number of farms will be required for returned men;