

had a chance to pay off some of their debts, the government set up a wheat board to cut down and to control the price of wheat? Did they set up a board to cut down the price of machinery, and other things the farmers are compelled to buy? No, they did not. It was not in their interests to do so. The minister has said that people have acquired titles in the past few years. I think the records will show what number of titles have been acquired. And because my speech was broken the other day I shall read again into the record the speech delivered by the late Sir Robert Borden to the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1917. I say it is important that this parliament should do its duty to the men of the last war. This is what he said:

You are men actually facing the enemy day and night. You are suffering greatly from fatigue, over-strain, and lack of rest. The marvel of it is that men could undergo such a strain without breaking; but you have never yet broken, and history will appreciate that in days to come.

You men are about to enter one of the most serious engagements that ever faced the Canadian corps. I cannot, at this moment, give any information as to where this attack will be staged, whether it be successful or not, it is to be borne in mind that it will not be an easy success. . . . We feel confident that you will succeed where others failed; for you have never yet failed in anything you have set your hand to, as a Canadian corps.

You can go into this action feeling assured of this, and as the head of the government, I give you this assurance; that you need have no fear that the government and the country will fail to show just appreciation of your service to the country and empire in what you are about to do and what you have already done.

The government and the country will consider it their first duty to see that a proper appreciation of your effort and of your courage is brought to the notice of the people at home, and it will always be our endeavour to so guide the attitude of public opinion, that the country will support the government to prove to the returned man its just and due appreciation of the inestimable value of the services rendered to the country and empire; and that no man, whether he goes back or whether he remains in Flanders, will have just cause to reproach the government for having broken with the men who won and the men who died.

I am trying to bring to the attention of the committee and of the country the duty that we owe these men. In conclusion, let me say:

We love our nation's heroes dead,
We very much adore 'em,
And since they haven't to be fed
We build grand tombstones o'er them.

These lines are not funny; they are incredibly, bitterly, damnably true. Let us clean up this mess.

Mr. QUELCH: I had intended to speak at some length on this question, but since the hour is getting late and the hon. member for Battle River has spoken at some length, I shall be very brief. The minister stated that the request put forward by the hon. member for Battle River represents only a small number of soldiers, and he referred to the meeting at Saskatoon. I think he overlooks the fact that the legion in annual convention at Calgary passed a similar resolution, and the legion to-day speaks for a large percentage of the soldiers of this country.

Mr. CRERAR: I am not aware that the legion organization had asked for the wiping out of all soldier settlement debt.

Mr. QUELCH: The hon. member for Battle River read a resolution to that effect passed by the Alberta legion. I did not say it was the legion representing all Canada. The minister said also that it would hardly be fair to the soldiers who have paid off their debts if we wiped out or greatly reduced the debts of other soldiers. That argument would apply to all debt legislation; it would be equally true of civilian debts. If the minister's argument is a sound one, we should wipe out the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act; we should do away with all debt legislation. I think one realizes that where a person can pay, he should pay, but where he cannot pay, then a reduction will have to be made. That is in regard to civilian debt. In so far as this soldier debt is concerned, I believe we would have been better off if we had wiped out the whole debt at the start, because the cost of administration has practically equalled the amount of the debt. I think most of us feel dissatisfied with the government's policy regarding soldier settlement. There are only 7,000 soldiers still on the land, 2,000 of whom have no equity in their land. I should like to quote one paragraph from the report of the special committee on land settlement which sat last year. It reads:

3. The minister may with the approval of the governor in council appoint a committee of not more than three members to be known as the adjustment committee at such rate of remuneration as the governor in council may fix and allow and for a period of not more than twelve months with powers to review and confirm or reduce the indebtedness of soldier settlers whose agreements with the director of soldier settlement were the subjects of proposals formulated under the provisions of the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act prior to October 1, 1939, or in the case of such other soldier settler as may be recommended by the director, with