

*Soldier Settlement Act*

Pension Act, for instance—if they go by the letter of the law instead of the spirit, then the soldier who is on the land and whose agreement has been terminated cannot get the advantage of this act. There are a great number on the land to-day whose agreements have been terminated and cancelled, but out of sympathy, or because the department could not use the land anyway, these men have been allowed to remain on. I submit that it does not change the principle of the act at all, but if you wish to protect the rights of every soldier, and I think that is the intention of every hon. member, he should be in the position, although his agreement is terminated to come within the provisions of this amendment if he is still on the land. What I am afraid of is the system the officials of the department have in adhering so strictly to the letter of the law in the interpretation of these matters, if they can possibly do so. The officials seem to think the letter is of more importance than the spirit. Paragraph (j) speaks of any settler "who is desirous of returning to the land". I am not prepared to trust that to the interpretation of the officials. The words are reasonable enough, but the interpretation given to some Dominion acts, by the pension board, for instance, has been unreasonable and harsh, and I would suggest that we say, "Who is desirous of re-purchasing the land shall have the right to re-purchase".

Mr. ADSHEAD: The minister said in connection with that clause that it would apply if the agreement had been terminated recently. The word "recently" is very vague and paragraph (j) mentions no specific time within which this shall take place. I think that should be given consideration.

Mr. FORKE: It would be applicable only where the land is still available. If the farm had not been re-settled or taken possession of by any other party, if it was still available, the soldier would have the opportunity of going back.

Mr. ADSHEAD: Is there any time limit? The minister used the word "recently". I think we should have something more specific.

Mr. FORKE: I do not think there is any limit so long as the land is vacant.

Mr. GARDINER: What would be the situation with regard to the great number of farms you have contracted to provide for the British settlers? Would these be available in case this bill carries?

Mr. FORKE: Not in cases where the settlers have taken possession of the land.

[Mr. McPherson.]

Mr. GARDINER: I mean lands already on the list. You have thousands of farms listed for the British government.

Mr. NEILL: I think the answer given to the hon. member for East Calgary is not quite correct, because there is a limit to the time under the bill, which provides that any settler whose agreement with the board has been terminated or rescinded can apply for reinstatement; but he will be governed by the general regulation found under paragraph (d) which provides:

All applications for revaluation must be submitted to the board prior to the first day of—so-and-so. So that he will not be able to come in after that date. It is limited to whatever period we now insert in that section, I suppose.

Mr. ADSHEAD: It must be 1927.

Mr. NEILL: Yes, in section (d). I think there is a mistake in that section. Subsection (g) says that the board shall credit the settler's account as on the standard date in 1926. The act as passed last year gave the date 1925.

Mr. FORKE: Yes, that should be 1925. It is a misprint.

Mr. NEILL: Then in connection with the remarks of my hon. friend from New Westminster, I do not know that he lent himself to the statement, but he put forward the views of the Canadian Legion in Winnipeg, and they ask for a flat rate and some remission of interest. The soldier settlers I represent are absolutely against a flat rate, and while it may seem unreasonable to combat the views of a large body of men such as attended the meeting at Winnipeg, still there are reasons for it. After all, self interest governs most of us. The majority of the settlers throughout Canada would not get any rebate under the revaluation. Some of the lands are worth a good deal more than they were when they were bought; consequently these men have nothing to hope for by the revaluation which is suggested. But if they can get the government to change the policy into one of a flat rate, no matter what it is, it is so much money to them. But that is going to do a great injustice to the people who need the money most. The minister says that a rebate of twenty-five per cent all round, as asked for at the Winnipeg meeting, would mean \$10,000,000. But a rebate of twenty-five per cent will not be sufficient in many cases. With the exception of the district of my hon. friend from Dauphin (Mr. Ward), there is no riding in British