

it is a farm or city property, or of the value of personal property, but as a lawyer he knows how to weigh the evidence of others on the value of the land or property and that is because he is so appointed. His experience as well as his training gives him that quality. That reasoning applies equally well to this case. County court judges not only are qualified to weigh evidence but have considerable experience along that line. They have to weigh evidence as to land values in the pursuit of their duties week in and week out, year in and year out. They have to do so not only in civil suits but in relation to appeals from assessments and all such things as that. That is their work. On the score of qualification, speaking generally—there will be exceptions—I do not think any attack can be made upon them.

But there is the further fact and an important one, that they have the time. Those situated where they will be required for the purpose of this legislation undoubtedly have the time to devote themselves to the task. I have long contended that we have far too many county court judges in this country. We could get along with far fewer, but if we have them, why not utilize them for this purpose? I am sure the great majority of them would be glad to be of service, and I know many of them who, like the sword laid by, rust and eat into themselves ingloriously because they have not enough to do. They are qualified for the work; they have the leisure, the time, to devote themselves to it, and they are on the ground. You do not have to go far in order to reach them; they are right there. I make this suggestion to the minister: Let him revise this scheme along those lines; put it into his power to come to the terms of the soldier, but make the terms so come to reviewable by the county court judge under such conditions that anybody who would pay more for the land could come in and make the offer and then the judge would say: No, this is not fair to the public; this is an attempt to gain political advantage at the expense of the treasury and I will not permit the reduction. If that safeguard is established, I doubt if it would ever need to be exercised in the whole courts of revaluation. The very presence of it would help.

Mr. NEILL: If the right hon. member will allow me to say so, I think the objection which arose in the Progressive corner of the chamber to county court judges was not so much because they were lawyers or ex-lawyers, but because they were comparatively ignorant of agricultural conditions. Would the right hon. member in his scheme allow or suggest

the assistance to county court judges of agricultural experts, the same as is done in Admiralty court cases?

Mr. MEIGHEN: That is the province of the witness. The judge has to weigh the evidence adduced. As a matter of fact in the west the county court judges are pretty good judges of land; they are engaged in that work all the time; but in case they are not, it is the evidence they weigh.

Mr. NEILL: How about the Admiralty court?

Mr. MEIGHEN: That court deals with other subjects altogether.

Mr. NEILL: Admiralty court judges are always assisted by experts.

Mr. MEIGHEN: But the experts have no judicial role to play.

Mr. NEILL: Advisory.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Very good. The witness is advisory. I do not think such assistance would add to the value of the result; I think it would add to the expense. That would be my view of the matter, although undoubtedly it would be an improvement on this. I do not think there will be any difficulty in having county court judges very fairly and thoroughly review these cases, and I should like to see a provision which would make it unnecessary for the soldier to have a lawyer at all. I do not think a lawyer should be necessary. If we are going to authorize the court to appoint a lawyer for the soldier in any case, I would be appalled at the size of the lawyer's bill the board would have to pay, high as my opinion is of the profession, especially when I witness the bills which this government paid last session and the standard they have set. I do not say that they are alone in this offence; the standard has been set for quite a while. I think the standard is an outrage and I do not care who hears my words.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): The right hon. gentleman hinted at the procedure prior to going to the court. Does he agree with the provision in the bill that an attempt should be made to settle the case with the officers of the Soldier Settlement Board?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Yes, but the minister did not catch the precaution I set. After this settlement is made it should be reviewed on proper notice before a county court judge for the protection of the treasury. If they cannot come to a decision at all, they should both be given an opportunity to appear before the