

Soldier Settlement Act

minister. I am aware that it is a very serious charge to make against officials of the board, and I am not making the charge. I am reading this petition, as it is my duty to do.

The other criticism I have to make will be very brief, as the matter has been already dealt with by my right hon. leader and by the hon. member for West Calgary (Mr. Bennett). That is the question of the process by which this revaluation would be arrived at. I am in hearty accord with the proposal under which a district court judge would be included in that scheme. In municipal affairs we have found that to be a very workable system. When lands are assessed by our local assessor and a ratepayer feels himself aggrieved, he first appeals to his local council, who sit as a court of revision. If an amicable adjustment cannot be arrived at between the council and the complainant, the matter is then left to the county court judge. That system has prevailed for a great many years and has proved to be very satisfactory. Surely if a county court judge can adjudicate on the assessed value of land he can just as well adjudicate on the value of a returned soldier's land.

Mr. MEIGHEN: There is one feature of the resolution which I should call to the attention of the minister. Various hon. members have referred to an odd case where the soldier paid too much for the land in the first place. One hon. member intimated that on the east shore of lake Winnipeg there were cases of the soldier paying four times the value of the land. I want to draw to the attention of the minister the fact that the draftsman who framed this resolution has not covered any such case at all, and has not provided for it.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Four times as much?

Mr. MEIGHEN: If the minister will follow me carefully he will see the point. In a case where the soldier, because of a foolish or perhaps fraudulent valuation, pays too much for his land, the excess over the actual value is not provided for in this resolution; he could not get any relief if the bill is founded on this resolution. The minister will note that the resolution provides only for depreciation from the time of purchase to the time of revaluation. Let me take a single instance and it will be followed more readily. Suppose for example \$20 an acre was paid for a quarter section only worth \$5 an acre. This resolution provides that if there has been any depreciation in value since the time of purchase, that depreciation shall be credited

[Mr. Murphy.]

to the soldier. We will presume that there has been a depreciation of 20 per cent, which would mean that the land is worth now \$4 an acre. The soldier is only going to be allowed \$1 an acre of what he originally paid. Does the minister follow me? The settler is allowed the depreciation only, which is \$1 an acre. That is all the depreciation that has taken place, and therefore that is all he is allowed, so in the end he will be paying \$19 an acre, whereas the land was only worth \$5 when he bought it and has depreciated \$1 since. I do not know whether I have made myself clear; if I have not it is my own fault. The point is that the minister does not provide in his resolution—and his bill, if founded on the resolution will not provide—for anything except depreciation. Excess value paid in the first place cannot be atoned for by depreciation. I will take my case in point again. If the board in the first place paid \$20 an acre for land worth only \$5, and the land has since depreciated 20 per cent, that land is now only worth \$4. The depreciation is one dollar an acre; that is all the depreciation that has taken place; that is all, therefore, that the soldier gets credit for. So that he gets credit for one dollar an acre whereas he paid \$20 therefor; he is going to pay in the end \$19. That case is not covered in the resolution and the bill will have to cover it.

Mr. YOUNG (Weyburn): If the land is only worth \$5 an acre and it was purchased at \$20, it was purchased at an inflated value. When the land returns to its true value will there not be deflation all the way through?

Mr. MEIGHEN: No, depreciation in value is the difference between the value now and the real value when purchased.

Mr. YOUNG (Weyburn): The real value?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Yes, the real value, not the value on the basis of which the soldier settler purchased.

Mr. YOUNG (Weyburn): Why not?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Because that is what depreciation is. Depreciation is the lessened value of the land. It is the difference between the value then and the value now. That is depreciation. That is my point exactly.

Mr. EULER: Would there be any real difficulty if we took the value the land had at the outset?

Mr. MEIGHEN: That is just what the resolution does do. The resolution assumes that, but you cannot always make that assumption.