

I may point out that the Soldier Settlement Board in their report issued on 31st December recommended revaluation and I would suggest that it should be carried out in this way. The board themselves should do the revaluing because I think any other method would take too long and there is urgent need of this being carried out as expeditiously as possible. I then suggest an appeal to a county court judge before whom shall be the complete file of the Soldier Settlement Board and before whom shall be taken into consideration the value fixed by the board on any land in the same neighbourhood. I suggest the appeal to the county court judge so as to remove all suspicion of unfairness or partisanship. My hon. friends to the left objected to a county court judge primarily because he was a lawyer. Let me point out that they are almost the first people to seek the advice and assistance of lawyers. Indeed, one member of their body, when he was one of the commissioners appointed by this House to investigate the customs charges, sought the appointment of special counsel for himself. Now this matter would come up before the local county court judge, and as he is trained to weigh evidence and is removed from all suggestion of bias or partisanship, I do not know of anyone who would be better fitted to deal with cases of this kind. Furthermore, all assessments in Manitoba and, I believe, elsewhere in western Canada are revised before the county court judge, which would indicate that he is probably more intimately acquainted with the actual values of lands and with all the local circumstances than anybody else would likely be. A county court judge would be better qualified than almost any farmer who could be selected either from the Progressive group in this House or in the country.

In connection with the appeal before the county court judge, I suggest that the soldiers should have a special representative of their own, paid by the government. The question of cost has been referred to, but we must remember that the returned soldiers who are up against it now cannot afford to engage counsel. All the circumstances should be gone into exhaustively, and to this end it is imperative that counsel should be provided to act on behalf of the men for the purpose of presenting their cases before the judge. I trust there will be no division in the House on the question of revaluation; Canada as a whole has received large value from the services of these men. It is not a matter of giving the returned soldiers a bonus or a grant; what is needed is to remedy an evil

from which they are at present suffering. For seven or eight years these men have shown their confidence in the country, and I believe that if a favourable opportunity were afforded them they could successfully carry on. As things are to-day they are labouring under adverse conditions that are almost unbelievable. In very many instances the wife is obliged to go out and work in order to secure the necessary groceries and other provisions for the family. It would be far better, in my judgment, to make it possible for these men to stay on the land than it would be to get new settlers to come into the country to displace them. Those returned soldiers who have put in four or five or six years and have made substantial improvements on the land have shown that they are fitted for farming and they should be given an equal opportunity to come in under this scheme.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): As the hon. member has been the first speaker this afternoon, I would put a question to him. In order to shorten the process of dealing with the question of readjustment by the representatives of the Soldier Settlement Board, what would he think of creating a board consisting of the district judge as chairman, the board supervisor in the district, and a representative of the soldiers themselves, the last named to be paid by the government? The judge and the supervisor would of course receive no salary. I offer this suggestion as it is possible that this readjustment could be very quickly made throughout Canada in that way, inasmuch as the cases could be heard in every judicial district practically as speedily as the soldier supervisors might be available. That would shorten up the process of readjustment. Perhaps the hon. member would give the committee his opinion of that suggestion.

Mr. HANNESSON: I am always reluctant to have the majority of a board make the decision if there is no review of the matter. I think it would be satisfactory to take the board's valuation, which could be quickly made by the district supervisor or the superintendent of the board, provided there is to be a review by someone who is above suspicion of partisanship or as having any special interest in the matter.

Mr. STIRLING: This question of revaluation of soldier lands is one of the most complicated before parliament to-day. The conditions are exceedingly varied in this great country—varied as to the nature of the soil, varied as to the crops grown, and consequently as to the marketing of those crops, and varied