

Supply—Soldier Settlement

Again, the minister told us that a number of these men could not succeed, no matter what the conditions were. I will agree with that, because I believe a number of men who were settled on the land should never have been settled there. They were not fitted for farming, and would have made a success if they had been placed in some other line of work.

Then the minister spoke about the organizer of the Saskatoon conference. I am not making any case to-day for the organizer of that conference. I do not know who the man was. I did see some letters in the *Western Producer* which led me to believe that the minister's statement was not quite correct. I am speaking about this matter in general, and I am not picking out any who are well to do, or any others who are very, very poor. I am talking for those who are on the land at the present time, and also for those who have been on the land, but have been compelled to get off.

Then the minister asked who could estimate the cost of production. Time and again I have pointed out to the government that industry has been able to get statisticians and accountants who could work out the cost of ships, planes, guns and everything else needed for the war. If they were not able to do that, how in the world would we have paid out all the money we have paid out, and have remained satisfied to pay it.

Again, when speaking of cost of production, let me ask the minister this question: Has the government ever estimated the cost of the interest on credits advanced to soldier settlers; and if they have, what is the percentage in excess of actual cost. The minister said that current amounts payable for 1942 amounted to \$983,000. That is the amount which should have been paid. Actual payments were \$841,000. The minister will not dispute the fact that at the present time we are getting much better prices than we have had for a number of years. In 1942 we had the best crop Canada ever had—and I say "best", because there were not many crops grown in western Canada before I went out to that country.

Another reason is the price being paid for live stock to-day. May I give the minister one more reason, in case he has forgotten it; I have given it once before, but I shall repeat it. During the period from April 1, 1941, to March 31, 1943, there were 253 settlers who signed quit claim deeds, and 108 were served with 30-day notices. I say without fear of successful contradiction that the fear of being

driven from their homes has been the cause of many people going to the insane institutions in Canada. We have many there now, and we will have more before this matter is cleared up.

Conditions on the farm, both for soldier settlers and for civilians have been drastic and, to a very great extent, have been ignored because the government is not concerned. If the government cannot find statisticians and accountants in Ottawa, then let them go out and get the information from some of the farmers. I am not seeking either the highest or the lowest cost of production. But we can at least strike an average, and when the average has been struck we should get at least a parity price, or the same treatment as is being accorded to labour at the present time.

I am not complaining about the manner in which labour is being treated to-day. We know it is performing a necessary service, and they are being paid a good wage. Why not use exactly the same means to figure out the cost of production of farmers? I believe the figures I have given the minister will possibly set him right as to the reasons for the 1942 payments being as near meeting current accounts as they did.

During the past years western provinces have enacted debt legislation for the protection of farmers and others. That legislation has always been wiped away—or at least it was, until the measure which was passed the other day. I have in mind the one which took the place of the former Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act. That is one more reason which the minister might consider, and for which he must take some responsibility, for having the payments brought up so very close to what they should be in 1942.

He has said that between 1914 and 1920 the price of machinery almost doubled. I tell him he had better check his figures, because since 1920 we have had a far greater increase in the price of farm machinery than we had between 1914 and 1920.

The minister said we were paying \$8 a hundred for flour and \$26 a hundred for sugar. At the present time we are guaranteed 90 cents a bushel for our wheat. Because of gambling, to-day the price is \$1.07 or approximately that, and that price has existed only for the past few weeks. In 1920, when those fancy prices were being paid for flour and sugar, does the minister remember what the price of wheat was? Does he remember that at one time it went as high as \$3.60 a bushel? Does he remember that at that time, when the farmers

[Mr. Fair.]