

Soldier Settlers

farmed all through the game and have worked just as hard as the other fellow. I did everything I could, even to the extent of working off my farm at other work so that I could stay on it and perhaps some day get out of debt. On the first of this month I find there were 548 men still in debt to a total of \$572,411.33, or an average of \$1,044.55. It means that these men will still have to work pretty hard in order to pay off their debts within the year unless some good reduction is made.

These figures indicate that 314 men got clear titles during the year just finished. During that year they paid in \$293,876.92. In 215 of those 314 cases reductions were made to the extent of \$122,023.25, or an average reduction of \$567.55. Instead of wholesale evictions and signing of quitclaim deeds under Mr. Murchison, only one foreclosure took place during the year just ended. I believe that was because the man had left the land years ago and was still residing in England.

There have been heavy crops during the past three years, and in my opinion that has helped to account for the good showing that has been made by these old veterans during the past year. Of course the average reduction of \$567 has helped. But considering the conditions under which these men have to work I contend that the whole amount should have been wiped off many years ago.

I bought land in my territory for one-quarter what some of these men paid for theirs, and I feel I paid a good price even at that. These men were saddled with heavy prices for livestock and machinery; they were saddled with worn-out horses that were good for nothing else but crow bait, and with milch cows that were just in the canner class.

During the past few years cattle and hog prices have been much better, and this has contributed to these men being able to pay off their debts. Actually many of them have gone without the things they needed in their homes, including improvements to their homes, so they might be able to get clear title before they passed on to the great beyond. I believe that all these men are 60 years of age or older at the present time, some of them being many years older than that. I do ask the government to give consideration to this matter and spend \$572,411.33 in order to clear off this indebtedness.

I believe we may now get this matter cleaned up, and that it will not be necessary for me to bring it before the house again. As I said earlier, however, if it is not cleared up then it will be before the house again next session. I want to thank members of all parties for their co-operation. Thanks for

[Mr. Fair.]

this co-operation have been expressed time and again by members of the soldier settlers' association of Canada, and I express it on my own behalf tonight. The men who are not on the treasury benches know the hardships that many of these fellows have gone through, and I hope the men on the treasury benches will see to it that no time is lost in rectifying this injustice.

Mr. A. J. Brooks (Royal): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to congratulate the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Fair) for again bringing this matter before the house. As he has said, it is a subject that has been before the house on many occasions. As a matter of fact I think this is the sixteenth time he has moved this resolution, and I confess it is about the sixteenth time that I have spoken on the matter. The resolution he has moved today is the same or nearly the same as he has moved in former years. The subject has been well covered not only in the house but also on many occasions in the veterans affairs committee. It has also been a subject of discussion with the Legion and other soldiers' organizations across Canada.

I must say that I do not consider the matter as important today as when the hon. member for Battle River first brought it before the house. A great many changes have been made and there have been a great many improvements. We must admit that. A great many improvements were recommended in the veterans affairs committee by veterans' organizations, and I am pleased to say that some, if not all, have been implemented. But, Mr. Speaker, it is now 1953, and it is a long time since 1919 when these so-called soldier settlers came back from the first war and took up these farms. I do not suppose any group of men in Canada deserves more credit than the soldier settlers. For all these years some 25,000 of them have been endeavouring to pay for their farms against very great odds. Most of them have now succeeded in doing so, and we are pleased to hear from the hon. member for Battle River that today of the original 25,000 there are only about 500 remaining who have not fully paid for their farms.

It is not necessary for me to repeat the arguments we have heard many times in the house with respect to why we consider these men deserve great consideration and praise. They took up farming after coming back from overseas, when farming was not a profitable occupation. They took it up at a time when the prices they had to pay for their farms were out of all proportion to what they were worth at a later date, and what they were worth prior to the time they