

14-15 GEORGE V, A. 1924

Q. Before you go any further, let us get your viewpoint. Is it your viewpoint that if the Government should revalue land we should have to reimburse these other farmers?—A. I take this view, that revaluation is a relief bonus. It is a bonus to a particular class of soldier settlers; you can call it a revaluation or a reduction in capital, but it is a bonus after all.

*By Mr. Brown:*

Q. But supposing we drop that and consider it as a question of doing the best we can for the crop, to salvage it, and make the best of a bad scheme.—A. That may be. I am not going to argue; I am not attempting to argue that, excepting that I think it is my duty to call attention to the fact that that situation exists.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we are going a little out of the way. I would suggest, if it is the pleasure of the Committee, that we proceed with the general statement on revaluation, and then all these matters would come out. Of course, I need not tell members of this Committee that all questions could be asked afterwards, but I think we should proceed with the general statement first, so I would ask members of the Committee to be so kind as to let the witness proceed. Of course, if the statement is not quite clear, a question can be asked to make it more intelligible.

Mr. KNOX: In the figures that Major Barnett gave us in regard to these men farming who do not come under this Board, does he not include the men who were on farms before they went overseas?

The CHAIRMAN: All that will come afterwards, but at the present time I would suggest that the witness proceed with his statement and no doubt he will mention this. Whether he does or not, questions can be asked afterwards to re-open all these matters.

The WITNESS: I would just as soon answer Mr. Knox's question right now. I do include in this, of course, men who did own farms. It includes some of those; it includes men who have bought farms since; it includes men who have gone on Dominion lands since; it includes a great variety of returned soldiers.

*By Mr. Brown:*

Q. Would it include men who had no connection or dealing with the Board at any time?—A. Yes, certainly it does. The 6,000 men who got free grants had to get a certificate from us, of course. There are 3,000 more who came to us, and the only connection we had with them was to give them a certificate to enable them to buy implements more cheaply. The others, about 10,000, have been refused loans and a very considerable part of those, perhaps not 50 per cent, but running into the thousands, a great many of them had already obligated themselves to buy farms and we refused to complete the purchase of their property. Now, there is only one thing further that I want to say, because I think the rest should be waived until the general statement gets into the hands of the Committee. On the question of re-valuation I would like in my evidence, if the Committee is agreeable, to deal with the situation when we come to it at another sitting, from four points of view, and I think it answers all the objections if the evidence is presented in answer to four questions. What you do, and what you should do depends upon the evidence that is given upon these four main questions. The first question is, "What is the true economic position of soldier settlers?" and I am speaking now of only soldier settlers who have had financial assistance from the Board. I am not referring to the others. That is the first question and perhaps the most important. The second is, "Will a special relief bonus by way of valuation or a cut in capital materially assist the men who are having difficulty in staying on the land?" Those are the two most important questions, the true situation, and will it assist them. It is just in that connection that I

[Major John Barnett.]