

I have one or two criticisms to offer with regard to the bill itself. Clause 4 provides:

That if the board and settler agree upon the amount of depreciation in value of the said land,—

And so on. The hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Hannesson) told the House this afternoon what I tell the House to-night in reading this petition, that there is not that sympathy between the board and the returned soldier that should exist. These returned soldiers, whether rightly or wrongly, have the impression that the board would be only too pleased to see them leave their lands in order that they might be sold to incoming settlers.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Surely the hon. gentleman does not make that assertion of his own knowledge, does he? I do not think that is fair to the supervisors and field men in the employ of the board. There may be odd cases where there have been disagreements, but so far as I can ascertain, it is the last resort when a man leaves his land. To say that these men are trying to put soldier settlers off the land—if my hon. friend will say that of his own knowledge I am prepared to accept it, but it is going a long way.

Mr. MURPHY: I think if the minister had followed my remarks correctly he would have seen that I did not make that assertion of my own knowledge, but I am passing it on to the minister for his consideration.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): But I make this assertion, that no case has ever come to my knowledge where, if there was any chance in the world for the settler to make good, he was not encouraged by the officers of the board to stay on the land. That has been my experience.

Mr. MURPHY: Does it not appear strange, or at least worthy of consideration, that the hon. member for Selkirk stated the same thing this afternoon? And he had it directly from the soldiers, with whom he has been in communication.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Will the hon. member for Selkirk say the men are forced off the land?

Mr. HANNESSON: I have a number of letters from the men.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): The hon. gentleman lives in a soldier settler district, does he not?

Mr. HANNESSON: I was not present when any man was put off, but I know that notices were served on men who were trying to pay

and who had constructed improvements, and I told the House to-day of one instance where a man, not having seed grain, went to work, and they have taken possession of that farm. I have visited that farm myself, and the statements I referred to in the House to-day were made in the presence of Mr. Robertson, the supervisor of the district, who did not contradict any of them. I gave the names to-day of men who have been molested or threatened, off and on, for the past seven or eight years. I also informed Major Barnett, and he looked up MacKenzie's file and said that a man cannot take up a farm unless he lives on it. This man was with his brother and had a man ploughing his farm, doing the best he could, but because he could not get seed grain he did not operate last year.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): In that case I suppose the farm was going to go without seed.

Mr. HANNESSON: Possibly so, but last year he offered to pay \$175 and 400 bushels of wheat to remain on the land, and was refused. Surely that man should be given a chance.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I am sure that in most of these cases the soldier has had a pretty fair chance. There may be cases of hardship where the soldier was forced off, but I can hardly understand it. These men are soldiers themselves; they fought side by side with the settlers, and I cannot understand it.

Mr. HANNESSON: I will send the minister the correspondence I have.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I am quite well aware that the soldiers complain, but on the other hand I believe we should be fair to the officers of the board. These statements are made that men are forced off the land to let new settlers in and that is a serious accusation.

Mr. MURPHY: Possibly I could make it clearer if I read this clause again. This petition was received by me last week and is signed not only by returned soldiers but also by representative men living in the same district. This is what they say:

Whereas certain supervisors of the said Soldier Settlement Board have often informed numerous settlers that the government would only be too pleased to see them quit the farms owing to the arrears in their payments and owing to the fact that a sale could easily be effected at a greatly reduced price to new settlers from England.

If it will help any I will immediately communicate with these people and get affidavits and first hand information to lay before the