

Soldier Settlement Act

and I want briefly to make some reference to what happened at the meeting which I attended and to certain letters which I have since received. At a meeting at which some forty-five settlers who are still indebted to the board were present, a resolution was passed. It was signed by some twenty-six settlers—I could not wait for any more signatures at that time. This resolution was as follows:

We the undersigned having met at a public meeting at Petersfield, Manitoba, to discuss the problems of the soldier settlers, have passed the following resolution:

Resolved that we ask parliament of Canada to revalue all soldier settlers loans to the extent of fifty per cent with no discrimination as to what year he settled on the land.

One point which they brought out at the meeting was that the value of the land must be reduced to an extent where they could carry on. Next year they will have to pay interest although that has been waived for a number of years. They also maintained that having spent seven years on the land and having made considerable improvements and gained experience, they should be given a preference in regard to reductions over the British Empire settlers. They further urged that no more soldiers should be put off the land till something definite has been done in regard to revaluation. During the last year several of these men have been put off their land, although last session this House was considering revaluation which was also promised in the last election. They further urged that the board must help the soldier with seed grain where help is needed, as their outside credit is impaired. That is a problem which we must face because, in case of hardship, the settler has no credit that will enable him to go to a bank or even to a private individual in view of the way in which all assets are tied up to the board.

I have several letters from settlers giving further particulars, one from two Hermanson brothers who claim that after they had struggled along for seven years, an endeavour was made last year to put them off their land. They state that they cannot carry on with their present indebtedness. They have families; one of the boys is suffering under a disability, and yet threats are being made to put them off for empire settlers.

I have a letter from another man named Oliver, also at Petersfield, who claims that last fall after he had borrowed money in order to be reinstated, they came to him again and said that he must pay \$500 or sign a surrender which, however, could be revoked later on. They called it a readjustment, and so as to have some control of his crop and to

[Mr. Hannesson.]

be able to pay his store bills and that kind of thing, he signed it. He is a man who has 150 acres broken and more improvements made than have been paid for by advances from the board. He has a large family and last year after paying the thresher and his store bill he had \$267 left.

A man named G. A. Willis in that district who has 220 acres broken had a notice served on him last fall because he wanted to pay his seed grain and store bill. The same was the case with a man named Smallwood who had 160 acres broken. These men all have large families and are men who served throughout the war. I come now to a man named Mackenzie who could not borrow money in 1925 to do his seeding. His brother lives on the next farm. He had fall ploughed his land; he left his brother to look after the farm and the cattle; he left his furniture in the house and he went out to look for employment elsewhere. The board has seized that farm although that man had lived on it for seven years. I visited that farm and over 100 acres had been brushed and ninety acres broken and fall ploughed by his brother last fall. This winter under the empire settlement scheme, although his furniture was still there, they entered the house and put in new beaverboard walls which they painted. They say they are going to paint the house this spring and they are putting an empire settler on the land at exactly half the price that Mackenzie was charged. That in spite of the fact that last fall he offered to give them \$175 in cash and 400 bushels of wheat. I might also cite the case of a man named Schofield whose land was bought by the board at \$31.25 per acre and sold to empire settlers at \$15 per acre.

That is all I propose saying with regard to the general merits of the matter, but I wish to point out two things in connection with this resolution. According to the first clause of the resolution the revaluation proposed is only for those who have not abandoned their land. That, I take it, would include those who have been driven off the land. I suggest that an amendment must be made to that provision so that any man who has been on the land for four or five years, who has done a certain amount of improvement that may be stated in the act, who for instance has broken fifty or sixty acres and who has made permanent improvements of a value of not less than \$1,000, should have the right to go back and redeem on the same terms as an empire settler could buy. A provision of that sort should be in this measure.