

Soldier Settlers

Anyone who has lived in Canada since 1919 and has kept track of the treatment handed out to those old vets of world war I, particularly when the act was administered by the department of mines and resources under Hon. T. A. Crerar, and when Mr. Murchison was director of the department, cannot agree with this statement by Sir Robert Borden to the men in France.

Mr. Mutch: Nonsense.

Mr. Fair: In the days of depression, men were thrown out on the roadside. It was not because these men did not do their duty; it was not because they did not work their farms as well as they could; it was simply because of the conditions they faced. First of all, they were burdened with debt because of the high prices they had to pay for land, livestock and machinery. It was impossible for them to surmount those difficulties.

In spite of all this a number of men were kicked off their farms and made to sign quitclaim deeds. Evictions were even resorted to, with the result that members of the house got busy and stood up for these men and finally Mr. Murchison was fired out of office and a good man put in his place. These men were being treated in a way that was not worthy of this country.

When I first brought in this resolution I was told by a former minister of veterans affairs, the late Ian Mackenzie, that the only way to deal with this matter was to give clear title. I believe he fully intended going through with that program, but apparently somebody else in the cabinet had a little more power than he did. My guess is that possibly the treasury board had something to do with it. The result was that these men were not given clear titles during the late Mr. Mackenzie's tenure of office.

Then later on another funny occasion arose. When the matter was brought up a man prominent in Liberal politics in Saskatchewan talked the matter out. Some say that he is coming back here to us again. In order to talk it out he had to bring in mothers' allowances, old age pensions and many other subjects that did not have anything to do with veterans' affairs. When some of us laughed at the way he was using the time of the house he got rather peeved, and I do not think he is over that yet.

Since that time the present Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg), whom we all respect and have respected since we first knew him, gave the old veterans a break. He was responsible for these veterans being given their oil and mineral rights. I want to thank the minister publicly. A lawsuit was under way, but the minister felt there was justice

in our claim and saw to it that those rights were handed back. I want to thank the present Minister of Labour, then minister of veterans affairs, for what he did in connection with that matter.

Since that time we have had another Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe). I do not see him in the house tonight, but his parliamentary assistant is here. I want to thank that parliamentary assistant for the good work he did as chairman of the committee on veterans' affairs. Before he came in I said that I hoped this would be the last time it would be necessary to move this resolution. Then one of my friends on the other side suggested that they would be glad to see me back again. But I do hope that this resolution is agreed to before prorogation.

It must be realized that this matter has been brought to the attention of the house on other occasions. Looking over *Hansard* I find that on February 24, 1930, the late Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King, then prime minister, when dealing with returned men, made this statement, as reported on page 44 of *Hansard*:

May I say that after giving a great deal of time and careful thought and study to this question, the government has come to the conclusion that the existing legislation is not adequate. In particular it has been borne in upon us that there are a large number of returned men who, while not suffering from any disability immediately traceable to some particular happening, are nevertheless finding themselves breaking down through causes more or less unknown. In other words, they are experiencing after a number of years what I think would be described in medical terms as the effects of deferred reaction. Though they went through the strain of the war, though they suffered mentally and physically as they did in those years, the fact that at the time they were strong and in good health led to nothing being immediately visible as a consequence of the strain they had been called upon to endure. As the years have gone by however, and the system has weakened from other causes, the strain of past years has begun to tell and many men are breaking down today apparently for no other reason than that of the strain of the war period.

I have read that statement by the late Mr. King to show that he was thinking of the problems of the veterans. On one occasion I visited the former prime minister in his library at Laurier House in connection with clear titles, and found him most sympathetic. Apparently there was some other power that did not surrender to his wishes.

I hope we are coming near the end of the road as far as these men paying off their debts are concerned. To begin with more than 25,000 were involved. On January 1, 1952, we find there were 862 still in debt, owing a total of \$950,725.33 or an average of \$1,102.90. That was the result after they had paid for something like 33 years. That does not look very good to me. I have