

Soldier Settlement Act

was speaking to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dunning) about a matter, the particulars of which I have here on my desk. A certain man purchased a piece of land from the soldier settlement board and later on sold it to a third party. The party of the third part took advantage of the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act. He appeared before a board of review and had his indebtedness to the settlement board reduced by some \$2,000. This reduction applied also to the payments due by the party of the second part to the party of the third part. The whole thing has reached a point where I simply cannot understand it. The only thing that can be done is to refer it to a lawyer to have it untangled. I would not want to see this act done away with; but at the same time there is no doubt that many people are taking advantage of it, and the very people whom the act was intended to help are being penalized. I do not know just how a question like this will be settled, but I certainly would like to see this resolution apply to everyone and not to just a particular class.

Mr. McINTOSH: North of the North Saskatchewan river in the northwestern part of Saskatchewan there is a goodly number of soldier settlers. Many of these men have been in there for years and they are vitally interested in any legislation which may be enacted in Ottawa. They feel that if legislation is enacted to help in the meeting of their payments, even then the problem will only be half met. They believe, and I think rightly, that even if that is done there is still a long range problem to be settled, the problem of how many of these soldier settlers will be able to remain on the land if some help is not extended—not forthcoming.

It would appear that year by year the number of soldier settlers on the land in that part of the province—I assume the same is true of other parts of the province and also of other provinces—is gradually being reduced. These men are being dispossessed, and the result is that those who are still on the land are beginning to feel somewhat discouraged. They are all of the opinion that the department should do something to alleviate their distress. This must be done if these men are to remain on the land and get any benefit from the moneys they have paid to date.

A few years ago the soldier settlers in that part of the province organized a soldier settlers' union. I encouraged that because I felt that if these soldier settlers were fully organized they could yearly draw up a bill of complaint—a petition of grievances—and present it to the authorities in the different areas. In turn those complaints could be

[Mr. O'Neill.]

presented to the department with the possibility of action being taken to redress their wrongs. But they feel that with all their attempts at organization, with all their efforts to benefit their lot, they have not a very safe hold on the future. Consequently they are looking to Ottawa for action.

After reading this resolution, I have come to the conclusion that the department would be well advised not to discriminate in any way. Bonus payments should be allowed to every soldier settler, whether or not he is paid up. These men would thus be given a chance to remain on the land and be more satisfied than they are at the present time. I agree with those hon. members on this side of the house who have said that on first reading of the resolution they believed that it was to be extended to all soldier settlers, not just to those who are in arrears. I believe that is the understanding among these soldier settlers throughout the west. I ask the minister if it would not be possible to modify the resolution so that when the bill is brought in, it will be as beneficial and non-discriminatory as possible.

Mr. MacNICOL: How much did it cost last year to administer the soldier settlement board, and what were the returns from the work?

Mr. CRERAR: I am afraid I have not that information at the moment, but I shall try to have it when the bill is before us. Ordinarily that would be asked for when the estimates for the soldier settlement board were before the committee for consideration.

Mr. McLEAN (Melfort): It has been said that this resolution is similar to the one passed two years ago, and I should like to ask the minister if he will consider withdrawing this and making it fit the bill which he says is going to be introduced, or whether he will change the bill to fit the terms of the resolution we are now discussing? If we pass a resolution that is exactly the same as the one we passed two years ago, I think we have a right to look for the same type of legislation.

Mr. CRERAR: The resolution is not quite the same.

Mr. McLEAN (Melfort): There are three words different. The first is the addition of "further." That is "further" to the reduction in the interest from seven per centum to five per centum, and then there is the designation of who shall receive the bonus payment. In March, 1936, we were dealing with contracts and payments that were at that time "subject" to the bonus being given, instead of "at