

APPENDIX No. 6

The WITNESS There are just two things that perhaps I would like to emphasize here, or discuss in a very brief way. There is, of course, the question of soldier settlers. They are spoken of as the men who are under the Board. As a matter of fact, the men who are under the Board who have had financial assistance number only 50 per cent of the soldier settlers who are on the land in Canada. There are soldier settlers—for instance, there are 6,000 men who have gone on free land and have got no loans from us. In most cases we would not give them a loan. Then there are a very large number of men—and we have checks on them to a certain extent, although we cannot say exactly how many men there are—who owned their land before they went overseas and then went back on it again. Then there are a very large number of men who wanted us to buy land and we refused, because the price was too high, and they have been struggling on under agreements for sale on their own hook. For instance, there are 3,000 men that we know of who get cheap implements on our certificates, and cheap lumber and so on. We have an arrangement with implement companies and lumber companies whereby we get special discounts, and a returned soldier would come in and get a certificate from us to the Massey-Harris people or the International Harvester Company, or the Cockshutt people, or a lumber concern, in which we stated that he was a returned soldier, and a bona fide farmer and entitled to discount. There are 3,000 of these men. We estimate from the figures which are available to us who are soldier settlers but who are not settlers under the Board. That, I think, is bound to be an important aspect of the thing from the point of view of the public, in considering the whole question of special relief for soldier settlers.

By Mr. Caldwell:

Q. You have made no expenditure on account of these men, and they are under no supervision?—A. No.

Q. They are simply men who have settled on their own hook?—A. Yes. Then, just as an illustration of that, in Manitoba the question of taxes arose, and I have no doubt it will arise as one of the questions here. We had a letter from the former Minister of Education for the Province of Manitoba, Hon. Dr. Thornton, and in the memorandum which he submitted he said that in one school district there were forty-one quarters formerly held by returned soldiers, and he put the tax question up to us on that. The total number of our soldier settlers there was eight, and the number of quarters we had was twelve out of forty-one. The other returned soldiers had nothing to do with the Board. In Dallas school section there were twenty-two quarters held by returned soldiers, and we had only five loans out of that number.

Q. The land that was held by soldiers who were not under the Board could be sold by the school board for the taxes, but they could not do that to the soldiers under the Board.—A. I am not discussing the tax question; I am not raising it from the tax point of view, but simply as an illustration to show that there is a very large number of returned soldiers who are farmers on the land who are not under the Board, and I feel sure that that point will ultimately come up. Any action that Parliament takes with respect to the men indebted to the Government is going to arise sooner or later with respect to the men who are also farmers and also returned soldiers, but do not owe the Government anything. They have been struggling under the same conditions, and in a great many cases have been paying interest on their money from 6 to 10 per cent, while the settler under the Board pays only 5 per cent, or no interest at all.

Q. I think Mr. Barnett will admit that we have no jurisdiction over these men and cannot take these into consideration.—A. I am only just indicating that at the start.

[Major John Barnett.]