

*Soldier Settlement Act*

municipal authorities. The Union of Municipalities in Manitoba have endorsed this resolution, as they have passed similar resolutions, and I believe have forwarded them to the Dominion government. It has also been endorsed by the provincial legislatures of the three western provinces.

The men who took up the land under the soldier settlement scheme have in most cases done their utmost to make the proposition a success. They have carried on year after year in the hope that times would improve, but unfortunately they have become worse. I know the conditions in the district of which I am speaking, for I have the honour to be a director of the Red Cross Society, which has done considerable relief work in the district, and in many cases the people are in a pitiable condition. Some men have abandoned their homes, others are still hanging on hoping for a return of better times. It is for those people I am pleading, although I would gather that the feeling of the House is such that no further pleading is necessary at the present time. I believe we are all agreed that a revaluation should take place.

In this connection I may say that only last week I received a petition signed by soldier settlers and also by some of the most representative farmers in the district saying that these lands should be revalued. I should like to give the House certain clauses of this petition:

That certain returned soldiers purchased farm land from the Soldier Settlement Board at a time when the value of the said land was inflated and out of all proportion to the actual value thereof.

That the said scheme was introduced with the object of aiding the returned soldiers.

That after endeavouring to farm the said land for over five years the said settlers have become discouraged and can see no way in which they can carry the heavy burden placed upon them as the result of said purchase.

That it appears that a great number of those who still remain on the said land are becoming deeper involved financially and the only reason they do not leave the land is on account of the fact that all their savings are invested in the said land, stock and equipment.

Here is a paragraph to which I would direct the particular attention of the government:

That certain supervisors of the said Soldier Settlement Board have often informed numerous settlers that the government would be only 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.

That great injustice would be done if the soldier settlers were forced off the said land after putting in their savings and so many years of labour.

That it appears that the said settlers still remaining on the land have farmed the same in a good and husband like manner and it appears the only solution is to have a revaluation of the said land for the purpose of attaining the object of the said scheme.

[Mr. Murphy.]

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I did not hear my friend distinctly. Does he state that supervisors are forcing people off the land?

Mr. MURPHY: I am simply reading the clauses of a petition which I received, and which I believe the minister himself now has in his possession.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Who signed the petition?

Mr. MURPHY: It is signed by certain settlers in this district, and was forwarded to me to hand to the government.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Where do they live?

Mr. MURPHY: I received the petition from Gladstone, which is in the constituency of Neepawa, Manitoba. I think the minister will find the petition in his office, because I forwarded it to the Prime Minister, and have a letter from him to-day saying he had sent it on to the Minister of the Interior. The hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Haneson) this afternoon, if I heard him correctly, voiced the opinion that some consideration should be given to these men who have abandoned their land, and I believe the hon. member for Rosetown (Mr. Evans) this evening made the same plea. While I recognize the difficulties of putting such a scheme into effect, I should like to also add my voice in support of that view. I think possibly the result would be achieved as well if the government would sell these lands to the returned soldiers who have abandoned them at the same price as would be available to immigrants under the land settlement scheme. I do not know why that result cannot be accomplished. Many of those men are off the land to-day after spending four or five years of hard labour on the part of themselves and of their families, simply because they have been starved out. That applies particularly to the district of which I am speaking. The conditions, I know, are purely local and do not apply generally all over the west. It was not the fault of the government or of the settler. It was more or less the result of settling these people on lands which require drainage. During the last two or three years the ditches which drain these lands became clogged, thus flooding the land in the spring, which prevented the settler from putting in any crop. I do plead with the government to give these people some consideration, for they have worked very, very hard to make homes for their families.