

in the end, be accepted as final; I do not suggest that any disposition to interfere would originate from without. But we have regarded these people as our wards, and we have made treaties and settlements with them; therefore it is desirable, if possible, to avoid anything in the nature of dissension, or anything in the nature of a charge against us of infidelity. Consequently, for the present session, I have decided not to ask Parliament for power to expropriate lands in Indian Reserves for this purpose. We are now engaged in an endeavour to secure valid surrenders of these unused lands in reserves. We have officers engaged in an examination and appraisal of lands in Indian reserves in order that such are not being used and should be used for farming may be surrendered to the Crown to be used for soldier settlement. We have attained considerable success so far; with one or two exceptions, the various tribes have not been unreasonable, and if we continue this policy we are likely to succeed better than we would if we now took statutory power to expropriate. I rather think that the attitude of the various tribes will be more favourable if we proceed along the path that we have now ventured upon and try to get surrenders in every case. If the Indians should become recalcitrant, or if there should be anything in the nature of mere obstinacy as against their own interests and the interests of the State, we might consider at a later session the advisability of taking expropriatory power, to be applicable in such cases. For the present, I commend to the Committee the advisability of leaving out anything in the way of power to expropriate Indian lands, and of allowing the board to deal with the subject by employing the more conciliatory method of procuring surrender of the reserves.

Mr. STACEY: I have no thought whatever of suggesting anything which would apply to Canada as a whole. I note that provision is made in the Indian Act for action in the various provinces with regard to specific phases of legislation. I do want to impress upon the Committee and upon the minister that if there is one thing in the mind of the average citizen or returned soldier of British Columbia that is, the cause of great unrest and discontent, it is the patent fact that much of the choicest land in the entire province is absolutely unavailable for use, and in all human probability never will be productive unless there is some radical change in the policy. Personally I do not feel disposed to give very much at-

[Mr. Meighen.]

tention to the argument that because we have always done something, we must always continue to do it. We have recognized the right of these people in the past; we have given them their opportunity. If their population is decreasing and the hunting is gone, why can we not go to these people and say: Let us make other arrangements; we will buy this land from you and give you a suitable place in which to live. We need not talk to the Indian about compulsory purchase, but steps should be taken to secure this land. We have the report of a commission regarding certain reserves which says that a certain amount of this land may revert to the Crown. But that amount is a very small percentage of the whole. I repeat that in British Columbia the Indian reserve question is a vital issue and is one of our grave troubles; and I ask the minister and the Government to make, at the earliest possible day, such provision as is necessary for the securing of a portion of these areas for settlement and production in order that that part of the country may develop more rapidly than it has developed in the past.

Mr. CAHILL: Do I understand the hon. member to say that we should take this land by compulsion from the Indian?

Mr. STACEY: I ask that the provisions which apply to land held by speculators apply also to Indian reserve lands. Here is a man who has 500 acres; he is holding it until some of us will go round him and improve the value of the land so that he may grow rich out of our efforts and our labour. That man should be compelled either to work his land or sell it, hence clause (a) of the section. Then, here is an Indian reserve of 500 acres with only a few Indians on it, perhaps none at all, but some band has a legal claim upon it. My point is that similar steps should be taken with respect to this land. The band should have the benefit of any financial advantage resulting from the sale of the land; the proceeds might be invested for them and they would then be in the receipt of an annual income that would be of much greater benefit to them than the mere possession of those lands which they held uncultivated.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The steps the hon. gentleman proposes we should take before going to the length of expropriation are now being taken in British Columbia, though not as widely as we purpose taking them very shortly. We are going to make most energetic efforts to reduce to the minimum uncultivated Dominion lands there, and if