

Supply—Soldier Settlement

I am going to go a little farther if this situation is not remedied in the near future. I am making a temperate request to-day; and if the Minister of Mines and Resources and the other members of the government could hear some of the remarks I have heard on the trains, in restaurants and in other places, talking with men and women of the armed services, the Minister of Mines would get off the treasury board and use his influence to see that titles were granted to these men and women who have suffered for a long number of years in order that we might have the privileges which the minister and the rest of us enjoy at the present time.

Mr. CRERAR: Had it not been for the last five minutes of my hon. friend's speech I would not have wearied the committee at this late hour of the session by attempting anything in the nature of a reply. The hon. member has certainly been persistent in putting his point of view before the house and the country. I regret that it is an extreme point of view, when we take into consideration the treatment that has been given to the soldiers of the last war who settled on farms in Canada.

In the opening part of his remarks the other day the hon. member quoted a statement made by Sir Robert Borden, giving what Sir Robert—and it was the point of view of the government of that time—regarded as the obligation of the country to the returned men. I believe that on any fair examination of this whole question, so far as the land settlement part of the work done for the returned men of the last war is concerned, they have been fairly treated.

The hon. member identifies himself with the request made by a small group of soldier settlers who met in Saskatoon some time during the past year. They have put forward the demand that they should receive titles to their property and should not be asked to make any further payments, either of arrears or of amounts owing in the future. That point of view has been very strongly pressed by this little group, but I say to my hon. friend that to consider anything of the kind would be a gross injustice to the thousands of soldier settlers who have met their obligations and who are meeting them to-day and are not asking for treatment of this kind.

I know there are some soldier settlers who, notwithstanding all the aid they could be given, would even then probably not make a success of their farming operations; but I may give the committee, since my hon. friend has brought up the matter, one or two illus-

[Mr. Fair.]

trations to show how little substance there is in the plea made by the hon. member. One of the soldier settlers, a man who was active in this meeting in Saskatoon—indeed he was one of the chief organizers of the meeting—has had a reduction in his indebtedness, incurred from the time he settled on his farm, of \$6,337.98. Not only that, but he is in receipt of a pension—no; I am wrong. It was another case I was thinking of.

Mr. FAIR: I thought the minister was wrong.

Mr. CRERAR: I congratulate the hon. gentleman upon the acuteness of his intelligence. What I was going to say was that last year, in 1942, this settler had 3,150 bushels of wheat and 2,000 bushels of oats. That was his own statement to the administrative office of the soldier settlement board in Saskatoon. I might add that this crop came from 145 acres of land, so that he must have a pretty good farm. Up to April of this year he had not paid a dollar on his obligations for the current year.

Mr. FAIR: What is the name of that man, please?

Mr. CRERAR: I am not going to give his name here. I would have no objection to giving it to my hon. friend privately, but I do not wish to mention it in the house. Furthermore, evidence has come to the attention of the soldier settlement administration that within the last few months, in response to an advertisement, this settler listed his farm for sale, placing on it a value of \$6,000, and asking a cash payment of \$4,000. That is probably one of the most extreme cases, but those are the facts in this instance, and that is the sort of thing for which my hon. friend is making a plea to-day.

Mr. FAIR: That is not correct.

Mr. CRERAR: Of course it is.

Mr. FAIR: No. The minister is taking a case at one extreme, but he is not going to the other extreme.

Mr. CRERAR: I did not interrupt my hon. friend while he was speaking, but I could cite other cases as well. The hon. gentleman made the plea that these farmers should get at least the cost of production. Well, how is one going to get evidence as to what is the cost of production? Let me give the committee some information as to how this soldier settlement account as a whole has operated. Current payments due from soldier settlers, that is payments coming due in the autumn of 1942 for the period from April 1, 1942, to