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WIZARD LIGHTING SYSTEM.

Discharged Soldiers' Settlement.

LOAN BILL OF £6,000,000.

COMPULSION IF NECESSARY.

WELLINGTON, October 8.

In the House of Representatives this afternoon, Mr Massey moved the second reading of the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Loans Bill. He said the Bill could scarcely be called contentious, as he thought most members agreed to the principle of helping soldiers. He wished to make it clear that the money would not be used for any other purpose until the soldiers had been supplied with the land required. The amount of the loan was £6,000,000, and he thought he saw a way of adding to that another £1,000,000. The rate of interest would be 5½ per cent., and though the term of the loan was not yet fixed, he thought it would not be less than ten years and not more than fifteen. Two and a-half millions of this loan would be set apart for payment of death duties and judging by the previous experience he thought this sum would be taken up for this purpose. There were compulsory clauses in the Bill but these differed from the provisions of the previous Bills, and would only amount to a sum equal to one year's land and income tax. This was the last compulsory loan, because nothing but the war justified compulsion, and as no further war was in sight he thought they could afford not to insist on compulsion in future. One clause instituted a new principle enabling the Government to buy back its own debentures if they were being sold on the market at below par. This was regularly done in Britain, and was, he thought, good business. Mr Massey then proceeded to read tabulated details of Government operations in connection with the repatriation and settlement of soldiers. Summing up these operations, he said they showed a great record. No country in the world had done so much for its soldiers, and he was particularly pleased to say that the great majority of the soldiers were doing well. There had been failures, but these were few and far between. The country was undoubtedly solvent, and he did not think the threatened commercial depression would affect us, or at least not for long. The whole of the future rested in our hands. What we had to do was to increase production, to bring new lands into productivity, and to make the cultivated lands produce more. The secondary industries should be encouraged, but the primary industries must come first. New Zealand would not be a manufacturing country for many years, and the most we could hope from the secondary industries was that they would supply local requirements for the next quarter of a century.

Mr T. M. Wilford said no one could doubt the solvency of the country, because while we had increased our indebtedness to £201,000,000 our private wealth alone would balance that. No one would object to assistance being given to soldiers but the question was whether we were doing the best we could with the money we had. He did not think it necessary to put the compulsory clauses into effect, because he believed that all the money required would be readily subscribed so good was the interest and so good was the investment. There was even a possibility of the Government receiving more money than was required, and if so he recommended the Government to adopt the suggestion made by Dr Thacker that the surplus should be handed over to local bodies, whose loan proposals might be imperilled by the more attractive Government proposals. The point he wished to make, however, was the failure of the Government from want of sympathy to take land compulsorily for soldiers. The Premier was fond of telling the House that he had made 20,000 sub-divisions in recent years, but when he was asked how many new settlers had been placed on these subdivisions he could not reply.

Mr Massey: It is quite impossible to say. Continuing, Mr Wilford said the whole of the land purchased for soldiers had been purchased by private treaty, and he quoted figures supplied by the Commissioner of Crown Lands in Canterbury giving the excessive prices being asked by the owners of land offered to the Government.

Mr Massey: These prices were not paid.

Mr Wilford declared that there were two properties in the Wairarapa which

belonged to two men without chick or child, and which soldiers were clamouring to have acquired. These estates ought to be taken and they should be taken through the Public Works Act. The Premier had said that land should be taken compulsorily. He said he would do so, but he had not done it. No individual should be permitted to hold land to block soldiers' settlement. It had been the proclaimed policy of the Government to settle soldiers now ending. He paid a tribute to the generous assistance given by the people in the Wairarapa in placing men on the land. Fifty thousand acres had been bought there much at about half the market value. On this 184 men were settled. Other parts of the Wellington province had also done well, and the province had settled more soldiers on the land than any other province. The Minister also detailed the good work done by the repatriation and after-care branches of the Department in looking after returned men. Applications for financial assistance had lately decreased. Up to September 30, 4375 loans for acquiring or establishing businesses had been approved, involving an expenditure of £932,446. A further 3248 men were granted loans for the purchase of furniture, tools, etc., and 3735 received assistance in other ways, the payments made under all headings on behalf of the men to repay their obligations to the department were very few, only about 5 per cent. of the total assisted.

Mr G. Mitchell congratulated the Government and country on what had been done for the soldiers, but he urged that every effort was needed to get the men settled in the country. The balance of population had drifted to the cities and towns too quickly.

Mr V. H. Potter contended that the Government should not be spending money on the compulsory acquisition of estates to settle returned soldiers upon while so much Native and Crown land was lying idle.

Mr R. McCallum objected to Clause 7 which proposed that the Government should become stock jobbers. The proposed power to purchase depreciated stocks was fraught with danger. He objected to returned men being allowed to become the serfs of mortgagees, which was what would eventuate if the present policy of placing them on such dear land were continued. He protested against the proposed further £6,000,000 loan for soldiers' settlements in the districts from which they came, but had this been done? It was a crying shame that land fit for soldiers' settlement was being held just because the owners did not offer it. It ought to be taken compulsorily.

The Hon. D. H. Guthrie said that the Leader of the Opposition seemed to think that the Government was subdividing land merely for sport. The fact was that they had found homes for 15,000 soldiers. One of the Wairarapa properties referred to by Mr Wilford had been offered to the Government at a price at which it was a gift, but had to be turned down because it could not be profitably cut up. He defended the Government from criticisms of the policy pursued in buying land for soldier settlements. When the men first began to return from the war it was felt that they were not in a condition to break in new land, and some small areas were bought to settle them on. That practice the present soldier settlement policy there was a tendency for the prices of land to be unduly inflated by Government expenditure in purchasing estates. It would have been better to have acquired portions of large estates compulsorily at fair prices.

At 12.20 Mr Massey rose to reply, deprecating the policy of taking land by compulsion for settlement purposes because of the cost and delays caused by the Court proceedings. If land was to be provided for soldiers the most expeditious method was to pass the taxation Bill now before the House, and impose the graduated land tax and if land was in existence it would come under settlement, but personally he did not know where the big estates were which some members talked of so glibly.

The second reading was agreed to on the voices, and the House went into committee on the Bill, which was put through in five minutes without amendment. It was then read the third time and passed.

NIBBLES FROM "COMMERCIAL CIVILISATION."

(By W. Hinchey).

The government, customs, conditions and trend of modern thought guiding and ordering the public and private life of the nations of the present day, are the product of the evolution of civilisation, spread over several centuries.

This transformation of the people, brought about by the almost miraculous growth of commercialism and scientific progress, has not been met by a corresponding forward movement in the framing of laws governing the rapidly altering conditions to which the people were subjected.

The malevolent effect upon the impressionable mind of youth produced by the doctrine of "go slow" or "do little," together with the encouragement of the idea that every employer is an enemy, is creating a danger of producing an individual who in his mature years may become an outlaw of organised society.

The industrial strike is one of the obsolete parts of our corporate organism. It was born in the infancy of our industrial history; it has grown like a parasite in the hive of manufactures; it is the cancer of industrialism, which has robbed of its life many a promising concern.

Who are they? What are they—this black-coated tribe, sleek-skinned in the fullness of their filched luxury, soft-handed in the practice of nefariousness upon the innocent, oily-tongued in the smoothness of their grinning sycophancy, and damnable in the open-eyed lying which veils their red-handed transactions under the name of "business principles." They are the "middle men," each and every one of them in a lesser or greater degree clogging the channels leading to the consumers; living by parasitical absorption upon the community and filling no position of usefulness in the social organisation.

The commercial traveller in his peregrinations cultivates the mannerisms, artifices and histrionic appurtenances best calculated to bring his clients into that frame of mind when it is safe for him to open his book and attempt to sell to the worried retailer something that he does not want, or that he may not be able to sell for months.

Thousands of pounds are being expended in the support of commercial travellers, and these huge sums of money are put on to the price of goods, and are paid by the consumer. Members of this army "swagger," where there are no other rankers, and where every man is a captain, through the steamboats, railways, coaches, and first-class hotels. Their baggage and hampers of "peeps only" encumber the coaches at concession rates. Their portly forms fill the best seats in the gentlemen's cars, and they puff the biggest clouds of suffocating smoke from the best cigars. They demand the best rooms at the hotels, and as "public benefactors" get them at "cut rates." They are privileged to growl more at porters, waiters and carriers than are ordinary "human atoms," they are connoisseurs in the culinary art, and are loud-voiced in their vulgar condemnation of anything not sufficiently tickling to their greedy palates.

The laws governing the sale of intoxicating liquors in all so-called civilised countries are, in their crude and incomprehensible imperfection, a fair indication of the progressive intelligence displayed by the chosen representatives of the people in law-making. It has become a kind of fetish with a certain class of unbalanced, ultra-religious victims of hysteromania to fix upon "Bung" as an outlet for their erotic delusions, and they shriek about the evils of "drink" from the platforms, the pulpits, and the street corners; the yellow light of fanaticism flashes in their eyes; their gaunt faces twitch themselves into the distortion of neurotic delirium; their mouths open and shut, distend and contract in a succession of horrible, ragged semi-circles and triangles with cinema rapidity, in their struggles to discharge the torrent of vapour calculated to "gas" the publicans and fumigate all intoxicating influences.

"Bung" stands quietly receiving all this sniping like a bull elephant dosing in the

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shade of the palms, flapping his ears in an alternating motion, and switching tail from side to side to drive away flies which are tickling the folds of his covering the amplitude of his sleepy case. But "Bung," like a bull elephant, is not as sleepy as he looks; he is the thesis of his attenuated air-bearing component; in the natural law consequent the comfortable glow of his portly rotundity attracts "cool air," and he emits burning gases in attempting to destroy his adversary.

The power of appetite has exalted "Bung" to the eminence of the highest gifts of the state. We find "peers" "beer," lords from the "whisky gillies" members of parliament from the "brasseries" and the "bonds," deliberating the hall of wisdom, taking a watch wheel on the ship of state, and brushing the cloth of exclusive respectability against the purple of the throne.

Mr W. F. Dunn, New South Wales Minister for Agriculture, has proceeded to Melbourne to endeavour to induce the wheat pool to sell wheat to millers at 10s or 10s 6d a bushel in order to keep the price of bread down to 7d a loaf.