

Land for Soldiers And for All

By Dr. D. C. McTavish

Prior to the election of past August, 1945, Premier Manning outlined the land policy of the Government of Alberta as applied to returned soldiers. Each applicant got his land the first three years, free of all taxes; then for seven years one-eighth of the produce of his farm if it yielded five bushels to the acre; then at the end of this period he secured his title. This liberal policy stands in marked contrast with the iniquitous policy which characterized the Soldier Settlement Land Policy subsequent to the First World War. In that settlement, thousands of the men who had risked their lives in defense of their country, were placed on lands mortgaged to the hilt. Now, after a lapse of a quarter of a century,

they have not yet received their titles for which they have been vainly clamoring down to the present time, with an arrearage of \$3,000,000 of interest charges which the Dominion Government has so far refused to cancel, on the unworthy plea of the "sacredness of contractual engagements." There is no vested right in a wrong, and an iniquitous contract is more honored in the breach than in the keeping. When Herod, the King, made a contract with a dancing damsel, he swore that he would give her whatsoever she would ask, unto the half of his Kingdom. When she asked for John the Baptist's head on a charger, he had not wit enough to tell her that the Baptist's head was not in the half of the Kingdom which he had promised, but in the other half; and in the carrying out of his contract, he justly incurred the execration of all mankind ever since.

How well has Henry George exposed the fallacy of such a plea as the "sacredness of contractual engagement" in "Social Problems" (chapt. 16, page 162) in relation to land title origins.

Shortly after the publication of my "Individualism versus Socialism" in 1938, a lady who stands high in Social Credit circles bought several copies for distribution among her friends. She sent a copy to an Englishman who acts in the capacity of an "efficiency expert" to the Provincial Government of Alberta. In reply to her, this gentleman wrote that "the writer did not get to the root of the matter" and further that "he was trying to make the facts fit the theory." In the course of a few lines he admitted that "it would be little use to abolish the 'credit monopoly' if we allowed the land monopoly to exist," a full confession that the author of "Individualism versus Socialism" had gotten to the root of the matter.

It was, therefore, with great delight that we listened over the radio, a few evenings ago, to Mr. Tanner, Minister of Lands and Mines for the Province of Alberta, elaborating on the proposed disposition of the public lands "on terms," alike to soldiers and civilians. If the Hon. Solon Low, leader of the Social Credit in the House of Commons at Ottawa, is, as reputed, an avowed Georgist, it augurs well for the future of Alberta. Telfordville, Alberta, Canada.