

**'FOREDOOMED TO FAILURE':  
THE RESETTLEMENT OF BRITISH EX-SERVICEMEN IN THE DOMINIONS  
1914-1930**

**A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy at the University of London**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

Over five million service personnel were demobilised by Great Britain and her four self-governing Dominions after World War I. For some their reintroduction to civilian life was straightforward and uneventful. Many simply returned to the jobs they had previously occupied before the war. For others their readjustment to civilian life was difficult, full of despair and bitter disappointment. Similarly, the repatriation, resettlement and rehabilitation of the empire's soldiers and sailors presented post-war administrations with a host of social, political and economic problems. So far as they were concerned reconstruction was a daunting challenge which had to be met with the greatest possible energy, efficiency and decisiveness. Moreover, solutions developed by the Imperial and Dominion authorities were seen as the cornerstone of a new and dynamic post-war society and empire. Soldier settlement was one of these solutions.

This period in imperial history provides a detailed study of the political manoeuvres and economic initiatives which formed the basis of a new period in Commonwealth relations. Primarily a study of social and economic policy, it draws together previously untapped primary sources and explores several important aspects of the transition of Anglo-Dominion relations between the onset of World War I and the beginning of the Great Depression.



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## INTRODUCTION

In 1987 Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright published Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life, 1915-1930, in which they argued that the demobilisation of large citizen armies was one of the greatest, and yet one of the most ignored, social processes of the twentieth century. I too was struck by this apparent lack of interest, academic or otherwise. Despite the fact that a large university library could be filled to capacity with the material on war and warfare, it seemed remarkable how little there was on topics such as demobilisation, repatriation and rehabilitation of service personnel. The subject has attracted increasing academic interest of late, particularly among social rather than military historians, but it is patchy and still remains one of enormous scope today. Soldier settlement was an important component of some of the Allied combatants' post-war reconstruction strategies after both World Wars. However, here too only a few writers have examined the question with any thoroughness.

Morton and Wright's book is the first detailed study of Canadian repatriation and rehabilitation policies after World War I, in which soldier settlement receives close attention. Good as it is, the authors did not tap important archival sources in western Canada, instead confining their analysis to official sources and archival material obtainable in central Canada. In Australia, the historical geographer, J. M. Powell, and the social historian, Marilyn Lake, have seriously addressed Australian soldier settlement policy. It must be emphasised that they were significantly influenced by the pioneering work of L. J. Pryor's thesis on Australian repatriation policy completed in 1932. Powell's penetrating analysis and his encouragement of comparative studies have greatly stimulated my own work. Marilyn Lake's solid but controversial study, The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria, 1915-38, is the first detailed study of one state's attempts to grapple with the complex problems of post-war land settlement and rehabilitation. Nonetheless, despite a rich number of important regional studies in the form of unpublished and unobtainable honours, masters and doctoral theses, no national policy study or inter-state comparison exists.

New Zealand has received scant attention. Once again, Powell provides the only up-to-date examination. Soldier settlement is

discussed in three useful New Zealand masters theses but in the context of the rise of the New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association and the depression of 1920-22. Although outside the scope of this thesis, another study by C. J. D. Duder on soldier settlement in Kenya provided me with some important insights. More importantly, however, nothing exists on South Africa.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore in greater detail the issue of soldier settlement. Using a comparative framework, the thesis examines two parallel but complementary themes: the settlement of British soldiers in the overseas or 'white' Dominions (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa) between 1915 and 1930; and the resettlement of Dominion soldiers in their countries of origin and the problems they encountered which allows for a better understanding of the difficulties faced by British veterans. Although the primary focus is the resettlement of British ex-servicemen overseas in the post-World War I era, it is necessary to first analyse previous attempts at an imperial soldier settlement policy and discuss the motives behind these schemes. Furthermore, it is important to place soldier settlement within the larger context of imperial migration prior to 1914 in order to demonstrate the changes in attitude and policy which occurred after the Armistice. Such an examination raises other issues as well. For example, what changes occurred in the relations between Britain and the Dominions concerning the incorporation of British ex-service personnel into a host of overseas soldier settlement programmes? Equally important, what were the Dominions' responses to British initiatives? And what were the political, economic and social ramifications? Did imperial soldier settlement lead to a transformation with respect to Anglo-Dominion relations? Did attempts to find the 'right type' of British soldier settler have an impact on future imperial migration and settlement policy? And if it did, how significant were the changes in Anglo-Dominion relations, if any?

Until recently, soldier settlement was seen as just another facet of Dominion land settlement policy; a logical extension of a tried and proven method to enhance the economic development of the 'white' Dominions. With the advent of Lake's book a new dimension was added--- social control. The attempt by the conservative and reactionary forces of post-war society to use soldier settlement to diffuse social unrest is an important theme which needs further analysis. This must be examined within an imperial framework as well. Why did the British



government, which had steadfastly refused to intervene in the migration field prior to 1914, suddenly embark upon a vigorous programme of state-aided migration after 1918? The war galvanised the British government into committing itself to a large-scale free passage scheme for its ex-service personnel between 1914 and 1922. What is not fully understood is the pressure private interest groups, such as the Royal Colonial Institute and ex-servicemen's organisations, brought to bear on the Imperial and Dominion governments. The internal pressures and debates within the higher echelons of the respective bureaucracies and the changes in attitude and policy formulation that resulted have also attracted little attention. Similarly, the impact of key imperial and national visionaries on soldier settlement policy, particularly L. S. Amery who stamped his personal mark on the free passage scheme in the attempt to establish a landed imperial yeomanry overseas, has until now not been fully explained. This study attempts to address these issues.

## CHAPTER ONE

### MILITARY COLONISATION: PAST POLICIES AND PRECEDENTS

'Colonisation by discharged soldiers', pronounced The Veteran in 1918, 'is as old as time itself'.<sup>1</sup> And so it is. Throughout ancient history disbanded soldiers played a key role in the settlement and development of expanding empires. The Romans, for instance, expanded and consolidated their empire by employing a system of military colonisation. Tacitus, the Roman historian and chronicler, recorded in his Annals the failure of one such Roman soldier colony.<sup>2</sup> Security was the principal reason the ancients settled disbanded soldiers on farms on the frontier. The settlement of a loyal, trained and disciplined garrison force bolstered the defence capability of a frontier territory and could be used as a militia in times of internal strife. Land was also a convenient form of payment for services rendered; a reward for the hardship and sacrifices soldiers encountered on campaign. A third reason was often to supplement civilian efforts to develop the economic potential of a newly acquired territory.

In North America during the struggle between the colonial empires of France and England, the settlement of French and British forces in their respective colonies became an important facet of colonial defence policy. After the expulsion of the French from Quebec in 1763 the British government maintained this policy in Canada in order to meet the very real threat of American aggression. Similarly, British soldiers stationed in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and India were encouraged to settle in these territories upon receipt of their discharge to meet increased demands from colonial settlers who were constantly threatened by attacks from hostile, indigenous tribes or from incursions, real or imagined, from rival imperial powers.

After 1815 a change of emphasis emerged with regard to soldier settlement. Social and economic considerations had always been closely associated with the strategic factors. Both the French and British had employed soldier settlement as a supplement to their respective colonial development policies in North America. However, government expenditure and assistance had been small. Defence rather than development remained paramount though many government officials realised that the development

argument gave soldier settlement wider popular appeal. But with the return to peace in 1815 the drastic cutback on military expenditure and manpower led to spiralling unemployment, in response to which the British government launched the first large-scale, government assisted emigration scheme to Canada and South Africa in which a small number of soldiers participated.

The intervention by the British government into the migration field, albeit on a very limited scale, demonstrated the increasing importance of soldier settlement as a tool of colonial development and social relief. By 1914 the arguments for soldier settlement on the grounds of imperial defence and of empire development had reached a level of equality. To understand this change of emphasis, the present chapter is mainly devoted to the colonial and imperial soldier settlement programmes in Canada prior to 1914, since the Canadian experience provides the most numerous and detailed accounts of soldier settlement policy.

## SECTION 1: RESETTLING DISBANDED AND DISCHARGED SOLDIERS, 1650-1867

Prior to the British occupation of Quebec in 1763 the French colony of New France possessed a form of land tenure called the seigneurial system. The seigneur was a private individual, usually possessing considerable standing and influence in the community, who received concessions of land from the Crown. In return, the seigneur was obliged to settle a required number of tenants or habitants on his concession. The seigneur was the civil and military leader of the community and as a rule the largest landowner. He possessed wide-ranging powers and rights which governed all aspects of the colony's social, economic and political life, the most important being the right to collect rents on land, levy fees on the transfer of tenure and charge tithes on his tenants' produce. The entire system was closely regulated and tightly knit with everyone knowing exactly his function within the community.

The seigneurial system provided a systematic approach to colonisation in New France along feudal guidelines imposed from Versailles. It was a land settlement rather than a land tenure system and though reflecting the social and political ideals of French society it was primarily conceived as a military solution to the problems of

colonial defence.<sup>3</sup> Soldiers were encouraged by the grant of free land to settle in the colony but they were disbanded rather than discharged because disbandment did not exempt them from future military duties. Consequently, they provided an important contribution to the reinforcement and strengthening of the colony's defences, and contributed to its economic growth and prosperity. The architects of the seigneurial system believed that if enough soldiers were disposed to settle in New France its defence would be ensured. Settlements were established along the St. Lawrence River and its major tributaries to defend the colony's navigable communications network from Indian attack or British incursions from the thirteen American colonies or the smaller Canadian settlements. The largest and most notable soldier settlement project in New France was initiated in the late 1660s by veterans of the Carignan-Salières regiment who established themselves along the Richelieu river as a buttress against the Iroquois.

British soldier settlement in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario followed the pattern earlier set in New France. Detachments of troops were disbanded in these colonies with the express hope that they would increase the productivity of the colonies and provide a first-rate militia for colonial defence. The strategic port of Halifax had been populated by disbanded soldiers in 1749 and was the first major British example of a conscious soldier settlement plan.<sup>4</sup> Following the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War in 1783 the presence of a large, restless and potentially dangerous enemy on the southern borders of its North American possessions posed a troublesome and taxing problem to the British government: how best to defend an already long and exposed border? The expulsion of France from Quebec had eliminated one component from the problem but it contributed another by extending the border area which needed defending. One solution was the settlement of disbanded regiments on the south bank of the upper St. Lawrence River which relieved, to a certain extent, the problem of defending Quebec from attacks launched from upstate New York. The United Empire Loyalists (American colonists loyal to the Crown who had fought with the British as militia and fled to Canada after the American Revolutionary War) were similarly assisted to settle along the St. Lawrence and the St. John River in New Brunswick in order to provide a trustworthy pool of irregulars.

In the years prior to the War of 1812 a large number of Americans, other than Loyalists, migrated north and settled in southern Ontario.

Canadian politicians became alarmed at this influx of settlers because, being unmistakably anti-British in temperament, they posed a real threat to the colony's internal security and could not be trusted in time of war. The British government reacted by instituting a settlement policy designed to inculcate a sense of loyalty within the new arrivals. Wherever possible discharged soldiers were settled amongst the American settlers to act as a deterrent against rebellion and insurrection. The seriousness with which the British authorities regarded this problem was clearly demonstrated by the generous grant of land for each soldier and the liberal financial concessions for stocking and outfitting each homestead.<sup>5</sup>

Demands for the reduction of the army estimates after the Napoleonic Wars forced the British government to initiate a programme of severe military retrenchment. This aggravated the growing unemployment that accompanied the deep depression which followed in the wake of peace. What remained to be done with these ex-soldiers? One imperial publicist believed the veterans provided an excellent source of manpower for the development of the colonies and advocated their emigration to these territories.<sup>6</sup> The British government agreed but instead of initiating a military emigration policy it began immediately to disband and discharge soldiers stationed in Canada. Partly as a reward for military service, partly to encourage permanent settlement and colonial development, and more importantly as a cost-cutting measure, discharged soldiers wishing to stay in Upper Canada were encouraged to settle as farmers. Lieutenant-General Sir G. Drummond, Administrator of Upper Canada, was given full responsibility by the British government to encourage, assist and advise the new settlers. Gifts of freehold land were granted to officers and men, with concessions varying from 100 acres for a private to 1,200 acres for a Lieutenant-Colonel. Several new townships were established along the strategically important lake and river networks of the Ottawa river with a small party travelling further west to take up land near Fort Douglas in the Selkirk settlement of Manitoba. A similar but smaller scheme existed for discharged naval officers along the north shores of Lakes Erie and Ontario.<sup>7</sup>

There were many obstacles preventing the conversion of theory into practice regarding Britain's military settlement policy between 1812 and 1854. Despite the British government's assumption that discharged soldiers and sailors made good settlers, the evidence strongly suggested that the contrary was true. 'Unused to agricultural labour and

inexperienced in pioneer life, [the soldier settler] had neither the resourcefulness nor the industry to succeed on the frontier'.<sup>8</sup> The disbanded soldier of 1815 was no different than his predecessor who had fought during the Seven Years War (1756-63) or the American Revolutionary War. Hardened by war, adventurous and restless, he was ill-prepared for the drudgery and tedium of farming. Yet the British government was more determined than ever after 1812 to make the military land grant a permanent feature of its colonial settlement policy.<sup>9</sup>

The strategic motive dominated the minds of British and colonial officials alike during the post-Napoleonic period. This was borne out by the fact that military settlements were located at strategic points along the Canadian-American frontier or at sites which straddled important communications routes. If an area happened to combine the advantages of both strategy and agricultural potential it was sheer good fortune. More often than not if an area proved suitable it took a lot of back breaking work to clear and prepare the land for cultivation. Poor roads, inadequate supplies, inaccessibility to markets and lack of capital compounded the plight of the soldier settler.<sup>10</sup> It was no wonder many of these men saw salvation in the land speculator.

The tenacity with which British authorities clung to the idea that ex-soldiers made excellent colonists, capable of improving the productivity of a colony during peacetime and defending it in time of war, was astonishing. Of course distance played a pivotal role, as one Canadian historian has pointed out: 'It was easy enough to sit in a London club and draw a picture of a beautiful little Utopia somewhere out in America where the citizens were the best of soldiers and the most industrious of pioneer farmers at one and the same time'.<sup>11</sup> When reports of large-scale failure and abject misery were despatched by colonial administrators in Canada the reservations about the policy which surfaced in London were more than 'offset by a strong sense of obligation to those who had risked life and limb' for their country.<sup>12</sup>

The idea of military settlement as a viable colonisation and imperial defence policy persisted throughout the 1820s and 1830s. However, it was becoming evident that despite the noble claims made by its promoters that military settlement strengthened the physical and economic bonds of empire, the Imperial government wanted mainly to save money. The worst example of military settlement which combined attempts to reduce Treasury expenditure and promote imperial defence was the settlement of British army pensioners in Canada during the 1830s.

Legislation was passed in 1830 which allowed all non-commissioned officers and privates entitled to a pension from the Chelsea Hospital and desirous of emigrating the opportunity to commute their pension to the sum not exceeding four years' pension into a final cash settlement.<sup>13</sup> The War Office outlined a rigorous set of conditions and qualifications that each pensioner and his family had to meet to ensure maximum success. Age, physical fitness and additional capital were the basic criteria used to select prospective settlers. Free passage and free land grants of between 100 and 200 acres were included as an added inducement for the pensioners.

The entire scheme was a fiasco. Of the 1,500 pensioners who landed in Upper Canada between 1830 and 1839 only 158 were reported to be supporting themselves in 1844.<sup>14</sup> In its haste to reduce pension payments the War Office ignored its own selection criteria. Those selected were old, infirm, unskilled and unsuited to tackle the harsh realities of life as pioneers. Government support and supervision were negligible. Ill-equipped for farming many veterans squandered their commuted pensions and quickly became destitute. The larger towns and cities seemed to offer an opportunity for the veteran to start afresh, but with no money or skills he had to throw himself on the mercy of local relief agencies. This aroused the disgust of local taxpayers, and according to one colonial administrator disgraced the colony of Upper Canada and discredited the colonial government. The Imperial government, reluctant to accept responsibility for the disaster, eventually acknowledged its obligations to the poverty-stricken pensioners in 1840. Relief supplies were issued and a small weekly allowance was authorised. But it was too little too late.<sup>15</sup>

Undeterred, the idea of pensioner settlements was revived in 1846 by Earl Grey, the Colonial Secretary in Lord John Russell's administration. The scheme, like its predecessors, encountered its share of difficulties, but it succeeded because of good planning and supervision. Pensioners were carefully selected for their character and determination. They were concentrated in large groups near urban areas which ensured easy and proper supervision, and they were given sufficient capital. Settlement near urban areas possessed the added benefit of allowing the colonial authorities to assemble quickly the pensioners in times of civil unrest. Similarly, it gave the pensioner direct and easy access to domestic markets. Once again the parallel objectives of cutting military expenditure and developing colonial

society provided the impetus for Grey's policy. By 1853 all British regulars west of Kingston had been withdrawn and replaced by 750 pensioners on active and reserve status. An overall reduction in Canada of 3,000 regulars was achieved between 1847 and 1853, in part made possible by Grey's military settlement programme. Furthermore, the use of pensioners on active duty as troops or police allowed Canadian authorities time to make the transition between dependence on British troops for continued security to self-reliance on Canadian resources and manpower.<sup>16</sup>

From a strategic standpoint it was South Africa which received the British government's closest attention in the post-Napoleonic period. Continual unrest on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony between Cape colonists and the Xhosa nation was a major source of concern ever since British occupation of the Cape Colony in 1806. The latest series of Xhosa raids in 1819 clearly demonstrated British weakness and insecurity on the eastern frontier. In the face of this threat, and as an attempt to alleviate the domestic unemployment problem, the British government offered free passages and land to men who would settle in the Albany district of the eastern frontier.<sup>17</sup> Each man who recruited parties of ten or more men was granted 100 acres per settler. A total of 4,000 settlers arrived at the Cape in 1820. The settlement party consisted largely of farmers and artisans, victims of post-war unemployment, interspersed with a few professional people, soldiers, teachers and clergy.<sup>18</sup>

Security along the eastern frontier remained a constant problem in the Eastern Cape throughout the mid-nineteenth century and this prompted another attempt by the British government to consolidate its position. The Albany settlement was further reinforced in 1856 by a large contingent of German soldiers disbanded from the British-German Legion.<sup>19</sup> These soldiers had been recruited for service in the Crimean War but became a financial burden now that the war was over. The British government hoped that their settlement in Africa would satisfy demands for military retrenchment at home and colonial pleas for improved security on the turbulent eastern frontier. The terms of settlement were quite generous, but disciplinary problems arising from a disparity of numbers between men and women limited the success of the scheme.<sup>20</sup>

Between 1830 and 1870 the debate on colonial defence and the changing nature of imperial responsibility was part of the larger issue



of Britain's future relationship with her overseas possessions. As successive British administrations wrestled with ideas for reducing the overall expenditure on imperial forces overseas, military settlement and the land grant system began to attract increased criticism. It was argued that group settlements were costly, ineffective and unnecessary. A large number of influential businessmen, politicians and political economists, known collectively as the Manchester School, saw little use in spending vast sums of money in overseas territories which did little to justify their possession. A political empire based on the direct control and administration of territory found no justification within laissez-faire economics. The 1860s were the highwater mark of the free trade era in Britain which had witnessed the steady erosion of internal and international trade barriers since the 1820s. The Corn Laws were repealed in 1846 followed shortly by the abolition of the Navigation Acts in 1849. The Anglo-French commercial treaty of 1862 crowned triumphant the era of free trade over international protectionism by significantly reducing tariff barriers on a variety of industrial and luxury goods.

Free trade, it was argued, promoted peace, international harmony and goodwill. Unrestricted access to world markets removed the need for military commitments overseas and participation in dangerous foreign entanglements.<sup>21</sup> W. E. Gladstone, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Palmerston's administration and a future British Prime Minister, was one of the imperial garrison system's most ardent critics. He argued that as long as Canada relied on Britain for its defence it would never achieve true nationhood.<sup>22</sup> Like many other free traders, he believed that the acquisition of self-government implied responsibility for new duties such as defence. It fostered self-reliance and self-confidence in the colony; essential qualities which would relieve Britain of the financial burden of colonial defence and release garrison troops for home defence or continental duty. He therefore saw Canadian demands for continued maintenance of a large British garrison in the colony inconsistent with their parallel demands for increased responsible government, and was determined to rectify this inconsistency.

## SECTION 1.1: CANADIAN POLICIES 1867-1900

On becoming Prime Minister, Gladstone championed the doctrine of laissez-faire economics. His doctrinaire approach to the problems of empire had been successfully employed for political ends in the election of 1868. His administration was elected on a programme of domestic reform, retrenchment, and peaceful co-existence in foreign affairs.<sup>23</sup> In North America the withdrawal of imperial troops would satisfy British domestic pressure for restraints on imperial spending, fulfil Britain's army reforms and justify the effort and ideal behind Canadian confederation. Equally important, it was vital that Britain improve relations with the United States so that she could concentrate her attention on European affairs.<sup>24</sup>

Upon assuming office Gladstone wanted the remnants of the garrison system to be dismantled as soon as possible. Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for War and the architect responsible for sweeping military reforms during this period, proposed to reduce the imperial garrison in Canada by 10,000 men.<sup>25</sup> However, frontier duty in Manitoba in 1870, and delays in the refortification of Quebec prevented the withdrawal of imperial troops from central Canada until 1871.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the reforms fulfilled Gladstone's election promise of adopting a policy of colonial retrenchment. More importantly, Cardwell's policies demonstrated Britain's determination to readjust and respond to the worsening diplomatic and military situation in Europe.

The entire policy caused great anxiety in Canada. Many Canadians believed that Britain was abandoning her imperial responsibilities and exposing Canada to eventual American annexation. This did not happen, but fear of American annexation, particularly of Manitoba and the North-West territory, was a motivating factor behind Canadian post-confederation settlement and economic development in western Canada.

In 1870 the new province of Manitoba was created and Sir Garnet Wolseley was despatched with a force of British regulars and Ontario militia to reinforce Canadian political authority in the region. When the adventure was completed the Canadian government offered scrip to each member of the expedition as a reward for services rendered. The scrip granted each soldier the right to claim 160 acres of land, the majority of which was taken along the Red River. The Canadian government hoped the expedition would stave off any American

annexationist designs on western Canada, whilst also acting as a deterrent against pro-American agitation or native unrest. However, most of the soldiers promptly sold their scrip to hungry land speculators and returned to eastern Canada.<sup>27</sup>

In 1885 the North-West territory was engulfed by rebellion and an expeditionary force was despatched to quash it. The campaign was successful and the veterans of the North-West Rebellion, like their predecessors in 1870, became eligible for land grants. The terms were generous and consisted of two adjacent quarter sections totalling 320 acres; or for those who did not want to become settlers scrip was awarded valued at \$80. Obviously, the proposed compensation was a patriotic response for services rendered and inconveniences suffered in putting down the insurrection. Once again, security on the frontier was another factor in determining policy. However there was a subtle but important shift in emphasis away from military strategy in favour of economic development which was emphasised by the doubling of the land grant. The success of the military operation had demonstrated Canada's determination to protect its sovereignty in the region. However, long-term security could only be maintained through an effective economic strategy in which large-scale settlement was an important component. Canadian politicians therefore saw soldier settlement as supplementing the overall development strategy. It was designed to open up the vast regions of the Canadian west 'to the young men of that soldiery who have seen the North-West, who know its advantages, and desire to settle there. It is of great importance...to that country and to the whole Dominion, that a considerable portion of that body should take up their habitation in the North-West, to which they have gone as loyal soldiers and as supporters of the supremacy of the law and of the Government of Canada'.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately for Canada's nation-builders, the added inducement of an extra 160 acres did not prove as attractive to the campaign's victors as the scrip.

Soldier settlement in Canada was scarcely more important or extensive after 1867 than before. What was markedly different about it after confederation was that land grants ignored rank and adhered to a more systematic approach to colonisation and the economic development of the Canadian prairies. As noted above, there was a change in emphasis. Whereas prior to 1870 military presumptions dominated economic considerations as the primary motive for military settlement, the emphasis had shifted in favour of the latter by the 1880's. The

initiation of a free homestead system after confederation was dictated by the necessity to safeguard national interests, promote western expansion and realise the goal of a transcontinental Dominion 'against the march of 'manifest destiny' south of the border'. Therefore the emphasis on land selection was shifting from military strategy and defence to planned settlement and agricultural productivity, with the economic motives becoming rather more prominent as the century progressed.<sup>29</sup>

## SECTION 1.2: A NEW DEPARTURE 1900-1914

Canada was the only Dominion to maintain a soldier settlement policy until 1914. After the Boer War (1899-1902) Canada expanded her soldier settlement policy in conjunction with the overall expansion of her immigration and free-homestead policies. The newly founded Commonwealth of Australia did not offer any inducement for its Boer War veterans to settle as farmers after the war.<sup>30</sup> The issue was discussed in New Zealand, but unlike Canada no special legislation was enacted for returning New Zealand soldiers or British veterans desirous of settling there. R. J. Seddon, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, made it clear in 1903 that no distinction or preferential treatment would be given to any prospective settler, 'whether returned troopers, or persons now resident in our colony, or persons of the farming class coming here from the Mother-country'.<sup>31</sup> Everyone would be given equal treatment. South Africa was a special case and will be described in a subsequent chapter.

In March 1902 the Liberal government of Wilfrid Laurier was asked in Parliament if it intended to make land grants available to Canadian volunteers who had participated with British forces in the South African campaign. Frederick Borden, Minister of Militia and Defence, replied that the Dominion government had not yet considered the matter.<sup>32</sup> The federal government was cautious for several reasons. The settlement and economic expansion of western Canada had been a major objective of successive federal governments since confederation. In order to facilitate an orderly and uniform settlement and development policy in the prairie region the administration of Crown land remained under the supervision of the federal government. Though there remained on the prairies millions of productive, virgin acres ready to yield to the settler's plough, any initiative by the federal government on behalf of

the veterans would be confined to the limited regions under its jurisdiction. This was a problem in itself. Because Crown land was a provincial jurisdiction outside the prairies, veterans from the maritime provinces, Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec would be discriminated against and would have to rely on their respective provincial governments to implement a resettlement policy.

In December 1906 the volatile Sam Hughes, a future Conservative Minister of Militia, tabled a resolution calling for a land grant system to be established on the Dominion lands in the three prairie provinces for veterans who had resided in those provinces prior to the Boer War. The resolution was, in part, a response to the steps recently taken by the provincial governments of Ontario and British Columbia who saw fit to reward their own veterans. Moreover, it was an attempt by Hughes to increase the pressure on the federal government for a policy. The entire issue of veterans' land grants on the prairies had been stalled since 1900 because, as the Liberals pointed out, until autonomy had been granted to the North-West territory it was not certain who would be in a position to issue such grants, whether the federal government or the newly constituted provincial governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Provincial status was obtained in 1905, but control of the Dominion lands remained in the hands of the federal government.<sup>33</sup> Volunteers from the maritimes, Quebec and the Yukon territory were not so fortunate. The federal government reserved the right to expand the scope to veterans outside the original resolution but made it clear to the opposition that it would confine its efforts to the three prairie provinces. However, it acknowledged the Ontario and British Columbia examples and encouraged similar participation from Quebec and the maritime provinces.<sup>34</sup>

It was obvious that the federal government was determined to promote land settlement in areas under its jurisdiction even at the expense of the development of the older provinces. Nevertheless, the federal government had little to fear in the way of criticism from its provincial counterparts. Their Crown land was heavily forested, inaccessible and would take years of perseverance and painstaking labour to make it agriculturally productive. On the other hand, the prairie region was rapidly being opened up by ambitious railway branchline construction. New areas of easily cleared land were being surveyed and sold to eager settlers. Veterans comprised an insignificant number compared to the flood of American, British and East European immigrants

arriving daily. But politically it was important to give them a fresh start for the sacrifices they had endured on Canada's behalf. At the same time the veterans' resettlement policy contributed to the federal government's main objective: an economic development programme designed to strengthen the nation. Yet, it was a contribution which took a long time to be realised.

In 1908 the Volunteer Bounty Act was enacted authorising the grant of two adjoining quarter sections or 320 acres of Dominion lands to volunteers who had served with British forces during the South African conflict. Surprisingly, the act made no mention of a prairie residence requirement.<sup>35</sup> The usual fees levied for homestead entry and land patents were waived. However, each applicant was obliged to meet the homesteading provisions prescribed under the Dominion Lands Act of 1872. Under these provisions each applicant was required to submit a homestead entry before 31 December 1910 and begin residence and cultivation on his claim within six months after the deadline. Alternatively, the applicant could surrender his rights to the homestead and receive scrip valued at \$160. Scrip, which was transferable, was issued by the Minister of the Interior on warrants issued by the Minister of Militia. The value of the scrip was later increased to \$500 in 1912.<sup>36</sup> The final result was a tremendous windfall for the land speculators as the land grant system deteriorated into the worst form of military gratuity. The Liberals, in opposition after the election of 1911, sharply attacked R. L. Borden's Conservative government, condemning the cash bonus system as nothing more than a 'big rake-off' which allowed the speculator 'an opportunity to make money without the volunteer doing what the country intended should be done'.<sup>37</sup> For example, of the 1.25 million acres of scrip taken up in Saskatchewan more than 95% was patented by speculators, and in Alberta the figure was even higher at 96%: 'a tribute to the acquisitiveness of the speculator rather than to the pertinacity of the South African volunteer'.<sup>38</sup> Problems continued to haunt the Conservative government as the deadline for the date of homestead location was continually being extended. Finally, 31 October 1913 was chosen as the last possible date for filing entry. Scrip could be claimed until 31 December 1914.<sup>39</sup>

In parallel with Canadian efforts to implement a policy for its own Boer War veterans were attempts to promote the immigration and settlement of discharged British soldiers, reservists and pensioners on the Canadian prairies. Accompanying Hughes's demands in 1906 for a

veterans' settlement policy in western Canada was an 'old favorite [sic]' of his: a request that the interests of Canada and the empire would be better served with the settlement of honourably discharged British soldiers and their families. He lamented that private enterprise had not devised a system of introducing this very valuable immigrant to Canada when it was acknowledged by the railway companies interviewed by him that ex-soldiers made good railway foremen and section hands. Hughes even suggested that the government should subsidise a settlement programme on the prairies for these men.<sup>40</sup>

The Canadian government had taken some interest in the issue since before the Boer War. J. A. Smart, Deputy Minister of the Interior, believed that many discharged British soldiers possessed a limited amount of capital and, 'if they knew that they could be located on farms, [they] might have sufficient experience to enable them to go on these lands or place their sons on them'.<sup>41</sup> The Canadian High Commission in London reported that an increasing number of enquiries had been received from discharged soldiers contemplating emigration to Canada. Past policies had concentrated on distributing pamphlets and emigration propaganda to the libraries at the numerous regimental depots. However, in August 1899 it was announced that the propaganda campaign in Britain would be intensified and expanded to focus the attention of this desirable class of settler on Canada.<sup>42</sup> The outbreak of war in October of 1899 delayed its implementation.

After the Boer War the Canadian government launched its publicity campaign. A special edition of an emigration pamphlet aimed at British ex-soldiers and reservists was released in October 1902. 'The British soldier in the last war has given ample proof of his capacity for endurance and adaptability during the vicissitudes of a most arduous campaign. The same spirit shewn in civil life in Canada will most certainly bring its assured reward'. Rhetoric aside, the pamphlet's real focus was on Canada's need for experienced agriculturists with capital, tenant farmers and farm labourers.<sup>43</sup> However, those soldiers who believed they had the proper experience and who wanted to emigrate were usually unable to pay for their overseas passage because they were unemployed. As a result, demands for an assisted passage scheme or a fare subsidisation programme were forwarded to the Canadian government. Smart warmed to the idea. He informed Frank Willard, secretary of the Imperial Yeomanry Self-Help Employment Association, that it was not the policy of the Canadian government to grant assisted passages or grant

free transportation to Canada. However, if there were a large number of willing young men eager to work as farm labourers in western Canada, it might be possible to make arrangements with a steamship company and secure a reduced rate.<sup>44</sup>

Discussions between Canadian immigration authorities and a group of British officers interested in establishing a settlement colony for discharged veterans and reservists occurred immediately after the war. W. T. R. Preston, Commissioner of Emigration in London, was extremely enthusiastic about the idea. He found the organisers motivated by the highest ideals; men especially interested in settling fellow brother officers. Completely satisfied that there were no selfish aspirations behind the scheme, Preston sent a hearty endorsement to Ottawa.<sup>45</sup> The officers represented the Rifleman's Aid Society. The project involved the formation of a syndicate in which prospective emigrants would become shareholders. This would provide the financial security and working capital the society needed to purchase farm land in Canada. They were anxious to obtain a list of railway companies which had land for sale, but they also sought the government's assurance that each settler was entitled to the free land grant of 160 acres provided under the Dominion Lands Act. Furthermore, the promoters were interested in procuring a certain number of townships or a large block of land which would be reserved for the syndicate.<sup>46</sup>

The government was willing to cooperate with the society and provide suitable land for its scheme. However, it was opposed to setting apart whole townships or reserving large tracts of land for a specific colonisation project. 'The difficulty', explained Smart, 'is that most persons who desire to have lands reserved for a large colony want a considerable time to carry out their scheme and if this is complied with it simply means that lands are locked up for a long period which might otherwise be settled on'.<sup>47</sup> Settlement had to be scattered. The promoters attempted to reassure the Canadian authorities that their project was organised on a sounder footing than previous group settlements. They spoke of establishing training depots in England which would prepare the settler for the task ahead. But the federal government remained adamant that it would not countenance the reservation of large tracts of land for an undetermined period of time. Previous experience with similar group settlements did not warrant an exception.

British army pensioners and time-expired soldiers received



attention from Canadian authorities as well. In 1905, the Department of Militia and Defence considered the question of enlisting time-expired soldiers in Britain for service in the Canadian permanent force. They initiated preliminary discussions with the Department of the Interior to ascertain the cost of passage and whether the immigration branch would be interested in cooperating with them on this venture.<sup>48</sup> The matter was temporarily dropped but resurfaced several years later under different circumstances. The pensioners posed a more difficult problem.

The commissioners of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, approached the Canadian government in 1906 on the issue of commuting army pensions of those pensioners desirous of emigrating to Canada. They had received enquiries from pensioners who had emigrated to Canada and were anxious to get as much of their pension commuted in order to buy land, stock and implements for their farming operations. Enquiries were also received from pensioners who wanted to use their commuted pension to pay for the cost of moving themselves and their families overseas to begin homesteading.<sup>49</sup> The Department of Militia sought the Department of Interior's advice on the feasibility of settling army pensioners in western Canada, but the reply was cautious and non-committal. Each case would have to be judged on its merits and was the sole responsibility of the British government. Although these men might possess some capital and a sincere desire to homestead, according to W. D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration, '[t]he only thing we can do is to advise the interested parties that there are plenty of openings in Canada for farmers, farm labourers, or persons capable of engaging in agricultural pursuits, and that any capable Army Pensioners will be very welcome as immigrants to this country'.<sup>50</sup>

The outspoken J. Obed Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Emigration in London, regretted the federal government's refusal to encourage and assist the army pensioners beyond the customary conditions offered to all other emigrants. He strongly urged his superiors in Ottawa to reconsider the matter. 'I am quite sure there will be very considerable disappointment all round at the inability of the Department to agree to what [was considered] a very simple proposition'.<sup>51</sup> Smith was convinced of the contributions these experienced men would bring to the betterment of the militia units in the districts in which they settled. He proposed that the Department of Militia institute a monitoring programme in order to keep track of them just in case there was a call to arms. These proposals were forwarded and accepted by the

Department of Militia with the fullest endorsement of the Department of the Interior. Names and addresses of immigrant army pensioners were forwarded to the Department of Militia with particulars of the branch of service in which they had previously served. This information was communicated to the commanding officers in each district and corps in the vicinity where these men resided.<sup>52</sup>

### SECTION 1.3: THE BRITISH NATIONAL EFFICIENCY MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION

The increasing interest in the plight of the ex-soldier, pensioner and reservist evident in Britain between 1900 and 1914 stemmed from the lessons of the Boer War. The military catastrophes suffered by British arms in the opening stages of the war jolted an overconfident and complacent people. It provided an impetus for critical national self-examination and spawned numerous political, social and philanthropic organisations and societies aimed at reforming and improving Britain's national ideal. As George Bernard Shaw, the novelist and social critic, observed, 'Whatever else the war may do or undo it at least turns its fierce searchlights on official, administrative and military perfunctoriness'.<sup>53</sup> 'National Efficiency' became the battle cry and catchphrase for such critics.<sup>54</sup> Tariff reform, compulsory military service, the Boy Scout movement, eugenics and more broadly the concept of social imperialism were promoted as means of rebuilding Britain's resolve and national character.

Social imperialism was a creed which inspired its adherents to perceive the empire as an instrument for solving urgent socio-economic issues in Great Britain. Though its roots extended back to the 1880s it was the Edwardian era that witnessed the refinement, extension and intensification of its ideas and appeal among a broader, politically more influential section of British society. Social imperialists emphasised greater national efficiency, imperial co-operation, integration and unity. Animated by social Darwinism, they were alarmed at the declining birth rates among the propertied classes, the high birth rates of the poorer classes, and the poor physical condition of army recruits during the Boer War who were drawn largely from the poorer, urban sections of British society.<sup>55</sup> Shocked by the military unpreparedness of the nation during the Boer War, increasingly worried about the violent labour and industrial unrest which plagued Britain

after 1902, they saw Britain's salvation in terms of a physical and spiritual rejuvenation of the nation. They discussed, planned and initiated schemes which would alleviate the stress on the social fabric of Britain and almost invariably looked to the empire for solutions.

Many social imperialists saw state-aided or assisted emigration as an important tool in their overall strategy. The pressure of mass unemployment and social unrest could be safely de-fused in Britain by indirect government sponsorship, or assistance of philanthropic emigration organisations, or through more direct state intervention such as subsidised passages or grants-in-aid. This in turn would create direct benefits in the Dominions by accelerating their economic development which complemented the social imperialists' goal of strengthening the physical and emotional bonds of empire. Trade unions, various denominational church organisations, railway and steamship companies, and philanthropic agencies actively participated in the promotion of emigration within the empire.<sup>56</sup>

Among the many emigration societies set up after the Boer War was the Naval and Military Emigration League (NMEL), founded in November 1909 to cater to the specific emigration and employment needs of the British ex-service element. Though lacking the established reputation and connections of the early pioneering agencies, it conducted a determined propaganda and lobbying campaign between 1909 and 1914. The general aim of the NMEL was to furnish ex-servicemen who wanted to emigrate with information on employment and settlement opportunities in the Dominions. The organisation was chiefly concerned with the welfare of enlisted men, particularly those with little or no pension money. Although it did extend a helping hand to officers with little or no capital, the agency focussed its attention upon those ex-servicemen who were out of work and had no employment prospects or future in Britain. It took responsibility of finding jobs in the Dominions for its clients and advancing the necessary money for passage and incidental expenses. It also endeavoured to operate on a self-supporting basis; recipients were entitled to repay money borrowed. The NMEL strongly emphasised this point: it was not 'a commercial institution, and [would] not...under any circumstances, look to make a profit. At the same time it [was] not a charity'.<sup>57</sup>

The league's central committee in London coordinated fund raising, propaganda and lobbying campaigns, while committees were established in leading Canadian cities. Australian and New Zealand activities were

handled through the offices of the British Immigration League of Australia headquartered in Sydney. The driving force behind the NMEL was E. T. Scammell, its founder and honorary secretary. Field Marshall Lord Roberts was the NMEL's president and it was his reputation rather than his administrative skills from which the league benefitted most. Roberts had commanded the victorious British forces in South Africa. Appalled by the sloth and unpreparedness of the British military machine during the campaign, he became a staunch advocate of military reform. In particular he sought the introduction of compulsory military service and was founder of the National Service League.

As early as 1907 British and Canadian authorities had discussed the immigration of British reservists to Canada. The question arose when the Canadian government asked permission to enlist British army reservists residing in Canada, in particular, Royal Engineers for its permanent force. The Army Council, the formal decision making body at the War Office, granted permission.<sup>58</sup> However, in the ensuing discussions several points were raised which led to a reassessment and clarification of the War Office's policy.

At the time when the last remaining British regulars were withdrawn from Canada in 1906, the Canadian government had been allowed, temporarily, to enlist reservists residing in Canada. Once enlisted in the Canadian permanent force these men were immediately discharged from the British army reserve. With the growing tension in Europe, the maintenance of a large, strong and well-equipped reserve in Britain became increasingly important. The War Office remained disposed to meet the specialised manpower needs of the Canadian permanent force but not at the cost of depleting its own reserve. Compounding the problem was the War Office's fear that increased emigration to Canada would further deplete its reserves. Once these men joined Canada's permanent force and became an integral part of that establishment, they were irretrievable and lost to the British army in time of war.

The Army Council decided to terminate the temporary arrangement of discharging its reservists upon enlistment in the Canadian forces. British reservists who joined the Canadian forces were now liable to rejoin the Imperial army on mobilisation. The Canadian government raised no objections and promised full cooperation to assist the Imperial government 'in calling out and equipping for service on mobilisation not only those serving with the Canadian Force, but all other reservists residing in Canada'.<sup>59</sup> In the event of mobilisation

for war, the Canadian government also became responsible for the collection and despatch of the reservists to the required theatre of war. In return, the War Office gave Canadian military authorities permission to recruit Royal Engineers in the United Kingdom.<sup>60</sup>

The emigration of men on transfer to the army reserve again became an issue with the Army Council in 1909. The discussions were sparked by the British Immigration League of Australia which desired to facilitate the emigration to Australia of soldiers who were transferred to the army reserve in India. Hitherto, free passage to a chosen place of residence within the United Kingdom only was granted to those men on transfer to the reserve wherever they were last stationed. However, British soldiers discharged in India were entitled under Indian government regulations to conveyance to a destination of their choice either in the United Kingdom or to the nearest port in any British colony within steam communication of India. The British Immigration League of Australia wanted an extension of this latter privilege to allow men transferred to the reserve in India the option of using their free passage to sail to a British colony rather than be restricted to returning home.<sup>61</sup>

The Quarter-Master General pointed out that any concession made to men leaving the colours in India would have to be equally conceded to men leaving the colours at other overseas stations. In fact, men leaving the colours in Great Britain might even claim the privilege of free passage to an overseas colony. This was a potentially dangerous situation from a manpower point of view as there were already 6,000 reservists living outside the United Kingdom. The Army Council did not object to granting these privileges to discharged soldiers, but 'the case of members of the Reserve, who may be called on to meet a sudden national emergency, is different [and] while nothing should be done to stop reservists living in the Colonies, it would be short-sighted to encourage them to do so'.<sup>62</sup> The request of the British Immigration League of Australia was denied and no alterations were recommended to the present system which allowed reservists to live outside Great Britain.<sup>63</sup>

In 1912, the Canadian Department of Militia announced the offer of 150 vacancies for specialised positions in Canada's permanent force. A representative was sent to London to negotiate an agreement with the War Office to allow the emigration of reservists to Canada and to acquire ninety artillerymen, forty-five engineers, five infantry instructors, five departmental corps staff and five army service corps personnel for

the Canadian military. The men were to enlist in the Canadian permanent forces for three years and were granted free third-class passage for themselves and their families.<sup>64</sup> The Canadian government believed that the offer would prove highly attractive to ex-servicemen and reservists wishing to establish themselves overseas for it allowed them the opportunity of familiarising themselves with Canadian conditions and way of life while in secure employment. From a military standpoint the advantages the Canadian armed forces obtained from the scheme were obvious: experience, expertise and professionalism.

The War Office agreed. It did not want to discourage the emigration of those ex-soldiers who had completed their conditions of service and were not obliged to serve in the reserve. However, the Army Council was unwilling to assist or promote the emigration of men still serving in the reserve by offering financial inducements such as advances on reserve pay or commutation of pensions.<sup>65</sup> Reservations were also raised in some quarters of the War Office that emigration was a useless exercise if no prospect of employment existed which did not utilise the training these men had received in the army. Adaptation to new conditions in an unfamiliar environment took time and the War Office readily admitted that men withdrawn from civilian life for extended periods of time possessed only the very rudiments of training required to adapt to changed conditions in the Dominions.<sup>66</sup>

The Army Council suggested that this difficulty could be overcome if the Dominion governments guaranteed employment for these men for a period of two to three years in their permanent forces. By establishing a transition period in the Dominions from military to civilian life the ex-soldier could familiarise himself with his new surroundings and ensure a better chance of finding secure employment. Indeed, from a military standpoint the Dominions benefitted directly 'as these men would form a valuable nucleus of trained soldiers, on which to found the more extensive systems of defence...foreshadowed by recent Imperial Conferences and local legislation. Such a nucleus would...tend to improve the training and discipline, and to promote the cohesion and military solidarity of the local forces'.<sup>67</sup>

The Colonial Office concurred with the War Office that the contribution of time-expired ex-servicemen who enrolled in the permanent forces of the Dominions would prove invaluable. But the activities of the NMEL were another matter. Privately several senior Colonial Office officials sympathised with Scammell's motives and organisation and its

emphasis on promoting imperial defence. However, they remained adamant that the Imperial government should not interfere with or commit itself in any way to the promotion or assistance of emigration. Committed to the doctrine of laissez-faire, successive British administrations had constantly repelled demands by private emigration agencies and charities to undertake a more active role in channelling emigrants to the Dominions. People like produce, the Imperial government argued, must not be treated any differently in a free trade economy. But it was the financial burden which the Imperial government most wanted to avoid and any hint of government monetary assistance toward emigration immediately raised the ire of the Colonial Office.

In February 1909, nine months before the foundation of the NMEL, Scammell had approached the Colonial Office with a proposal to assist British army pensioners desirous of emigrating to the Dominions. Scammell was no doubt probing the permanent officials to see what kind of reaction he could expect when the NMEL was launched later that year. He advocated the commutation of military pensions, in whole or in part, to enable army pensioners to settle in the overseas empire, and urged the government to provide cheap passage for the pensioners, accommodation and temporary employment upon arrival in the Dominions. The cash value of the commuted pension would defray the costs of passage, accommodation and incidental expenses. As a safeguard the cash value of the commuted pension would not be given to the pensioner until he had sufficient time to adjust to the colonial environment. This would 'enable him to judge his own fitness for colonial life and the prospects offered him in that colony'.<sup>68</sup> C. P. Lucas, an Assistant Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, regarded Scammell's request for pension commutation 'a very dangerous thing', and he reported that the representative from the Local Government Board 'spoke most strongly' against the entire proposition.<sup>69</sup>

The Imperial government reiterated its opposition in Parliament to financial gratuities to assist ex-soldiers and reservists to emigrate. Sir Clement Kinloch-Cooke, a leading editor, parliamentarian and an avid emigration lobbyist, asked the Secretary of State for War, R. B. Haldane, whether the government had considered the recommendations regarding emigration tabled in 1906 by the Ward Committee on the Civil Employment of Ex-Soldiers and Sailors. In particular, had the Secretary examined the possibility of negotiating an agreement with the Dominions to advance the money necessary to cover the travelling expenses of the

ex-servicemen? Furthermore, had the Secretary investigated the Dominions' views on the matter?<sup>70</sup> Haldane replied that no concrete steps had been taken to learn the views of the Dominions and he emphasised the restrictive nature regarding the emigration of reservists. He endorsed, however, the emigration and employment of time-expired soldiers in the permanent forces of the Dominions.<sup>71</sup>

The preliminary enquiries conducted by Scammell and Kinloch-Cooke into the Imperial government's attitude toward military migration were important for several reasons. First, they forced the Imperial government to start thinking seriously about the discharge, transfer and employment of its reservists and time-expired men in the Dominions. In particular, their enquiries illustrated the use of military migration as a method which would enhance unity, cooperation and coordination between the military forces of the mother country and the Dominions, and as a constructive step toward the improvement of imperial defence.<sup>72</sup> Finally, the enquiries forced the British government to come to grips with an increasingly important issue. As we have seen, the War Office became alarmed at the potential manpower drain military migration implied. Consequently, it rejected the recommendations of both the Ward Committee and the Tennyson Committee on Agricultural Settlements in British Colonies, to provide state-aided emigration to the Dominions for selected ex-servicemen and their families.<sup>73</sup> The War Office also rejected the suggestion that a central association, subsidised but not controlled by the Admiralty and War Office, be created to coordinate the efforts of the voluntary agencies and charities interested in the welfare of ex-servicemen.<sup>74</sup> However, the Army Council approved the recommendation of the general officer commanding the London district, to convene an informal conference between the employment and charitable institutions and the permanent under-secretaries of the departments of state concerned with the problem of employment and emigration of ex-servicemen.<sup>75</sup>

Despite initial Colonial Office objections and War Office reservations the first eighteen months were encouraging for the NMEL. Correspondence from interested applicants seeking information and advice reached over 2,100 enquiries. Canada received the lion's share of the 268 ex-servicemen who did emigrate; 137 embarking on civil employment and forty-six joining the Canadian military. Australia took seventy-eight while New Zealand and South Africa gained only one ex-service emigrant each.<sup>76</sup> The numbers for the following eighteen months (July



1911 to December 1912) more than doubled. Of the 671 ex-servicemen who emigrated from England, 421 embarked for Canada while 239 travelled to Australia. Once again the numbers destined for South Africa and New Zealand proved negligible. What remained surprising about the Canadian statistics was that those undertaking military employment outstripped those with jobs in the civil sector: 221 compared to 157 respectively. A new dimension was demonstrated by the statistics with forty-three ex-servicemen entering police work in Canada.<sup>77</sup>

The NMEL was pleased with its accomplishments in three years of operation. Approximately 1,500 men, women and children had emigrated under the auspices of the league. Even more gratifying was the close cooperation the league enjoyed with the various regimental associations who contributed to the league's coffers and to the fares of ex-servicemen and their families. This was of considerable importance because it relieved some of the financial burden and allowed the NMEL to help a number of the less fortunate men who needed greater assistance. In 1912 the league advanced money to 208 emigrants and obtained reductions on passage for a further twenty-five. Not surprisingly, in light of the Canadian government's offer of 150 vacancies in the permanent force, the federal government paid full fare for seventy men procured through the NMEL. In the spring of 1913 the remaining eighty candidates emigrated to join the Canadian permanent force. Once again they were obtained through the league; fifty-three for the Royal Canadian Garrison Artillery and twenty-seven for the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery.<sup>78</sup>

Despite growing confidence within the league, fostered by its initial successes, its members remained determined not to sit on their laurels. The executive warned that if it had not been for a timely contribution from a private enthusiast the entire organisation would have ceased operations. Much more could be done for an ever growing number of applicants, but inadequate funding was preventing the league from effectively carrying out its objectives. An appeal was made to the membership to increase the value of its donations and endeavour to enrol new members to broaden the financial resources of the organisation.<sup>79</sup> A further appeal was made to the public for a working fund of £10,000. The league suggested that it was nothing for the Imperial and Dominion governments to contribute £2,000 each to the fund.

What a trifle it is to give new hope in life to some  
thousand men who have served their country well each year;

to add a battalion...each year to the defensive forces of the Dominions---men whose vital energies and physical strength will be conserved instead of sinking through despair into inefficiency, as it too often does under conditions at home; to spread a leaven of men of British blood, disciplined and filled with reverence for the flag, through Canada, Australia, and South Africa!<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, the league had to ensure that its critics did not undermine its reputation as an imperial philanthropic agency. The league took great pains to remind its supporters that it did not advocate emigration except in those cases where time-expired ex-servicemen found it impossible to find employment in Britain. From its inception in 1909 the NMEL stressed that no man would be sent to the Dominions unless he had a definite offer of employment.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, the league was determined to give ex-servicemen a chance to prosper and become wage earners in another part of the empire rather than sink to the depths of poverty and 'human wreckage'; a condition already too prevalent amongst these men.<sup>82</sup> This would involve greater cooperation from the Imperial and Dominion authorities.

In August 1912 Scammell arrived in Canada for a two to three month tour with the express purpose of visiting all the provinces to investigate the civil and military openings each offered to the league's clients.<sup>83</sup> Before any proposals were prepared and submitted to the Canadian government, Scammell thought it wise to confer with the provincial committees of the league as to the availability of job opportunities for an increased number of ex-servicemen; also to establish whether arrangements existed between the Canadian government and the league for securing immigrants. He addressed meetings all across the country receiving wide press coverage and a good deal of enthusiastic support. J. B. Walker, Superintendent of Immigration in Winnipeg endorsed Scammell's proposals because they constituted 'the most sane, sensible and practical immigration policy that had ever been submitted to him'.<sup>84</sup>

Scammell submitted the proposals to the Minister of the Interior in late October. He informed the minister that he had been empowered to ask the Canadian government if they were prepared to advance fares, with or without interest, to carefully selected candidates and if they were prepared to arrange, through the immigration officers in cooperation with the Canadian committees, to secure repayment of the money advanced.<sup>85</sup> In a further letter to W. J. Roche, the new Minister of

the Interior, Scammell proposed that in the event of the Canadian government agreeing to the NMEL's fare subsidisation scheme, the league would be willing to allow Canadian emigration officials in Britain to participate in the selection of prospective ex-servicemen. The league would be wholly responsible for guaranteeing advances made to immigrants and sought to reassure Canadian authorities that the machinery existed to make the system of repayment work.

There was a further consideration. Scammell wanted the applicants to be regarded as a special class because of the sacrifices they had made to the empire, their potential as good settlers and as a source of manpower in future conflicts. The ex-servicemen, he insisted, were an investment in the future strength of the empire. Scammell argued that monetarily they constituted a 'direct financial advantage' to Canada in the neighbourhood of \$650,000-\$700,000 annually.<sup>86</sup> If the Canadian government accepted the 'experimental arrangement' with the league for the immigration of 1,000 British ex-servicemen, a 'considerable addition' to Canada's 'means of defence' would be achieved justifying the future expansion of the scheme.<sup>87</sup>

Canadian immigration authorities found Scammell's request for government financial assistance 'somewhat unusual'.<sup>88</sup> However, the Department of Militia welcomed the NMEL's offer to place one of its members from its executive committee at the disposal of the Canadian government to assist in the screening and selection of successful applicants. Canadian authorities also agreed to let the league make all the necessary passage arrangements for the ex-soldiers and their families. To facilitate smoother communications between the NMEL and the Canadian government in London, the Department of Militia requested that Lieutenant-Colonel P. E. Thacker, previously attached to the General Staff at the War Office, be temporarily posted as the Canadian government's liaison officer with the NMEL. The War Office complied.<sup>89</sup> It also agreed to conduct medical examinations of applicants prior to embarkation on behalf of the Canadian government. The War Office acceded to this request after a number of men had been refused entry into Canada on the grounds of being medically unfit.<sup>90</sup> Though the cases were isolated they had received wide publicity and had proven embarrassing on both sides of the Atlantic.

The majority of the ex-servicemen which the league sent to Canada were found satisfactory, but the government was extremely disappointed by the very small percentage who embarked upon farming. As early as

1903, senior immigration officials had reported that ex-soldiers rarely made good farmers in Canada and those who did take up farming seldom remained on the land for any length of time 'as most of them do not seem to care for steady work'.<sup>91</sup> W. D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration in Ottawa, reported that 'whether it is the earlier training and lack of initiative, I do not know, but in any case they make poor farmers....They seldom take to agricultural work, preferring rather to stay in the cities where numbers of them can be found working as elevator men, janitors, etc'.<sup>92</sup> This trend continued right up to the outbreak of war. Of the 314 subsidised ex-servicemen who arrived in Canada during 1913 only twenty-nine took up farming.<sup>93</sup> British army pensioners proved to be particularly troublesome and the most embarrassing from the Department of the Interior's viewpoint. After several disappointing placements Scott warned the Canadian High Commission that army pensioners were better left in the mother-country. 'Our Employment Agents will scarcely touch any more charitable organisation or army pensioners....Almost without exception they complain that such men are worse than useless, owing to the trouble they give in being placed'.<sup>94</sup>

Scott advised the government not to contemplate or initiate an increased absorption of the ex-soldier class.<sup>95</sup> Landing permits would be granted to ex-servicemen provided they could pay the \$200 landing fee. Immigration agents had the authority to waive the monetary regulations only if the men were going to assured agricultural employment, and not if they were 'destined to employment other than farm work'.<sup>96</sup> W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, agreed and the monetary regulations were reintroduced. Landing fees would be waived only in special circumstances such as agricultural labourers, farmers and those enlisting with the Canadian army or the Royal North West Mounted Police; or in cases when certain classes of unskilled labour were not available in Canada or within easy access of the district where the immigrant was being employed.<sup>97</sup>

In March 1914 Canadian authorities made it abundantly clear to Scammell that the 'need of Canada is first and always for men who are prepared to work on the land and that...this is the only class of men who should be encouraged to emigrate'.<sup>98</sup> Scammell posed no objections and offered to make a concerted effort to secure ex-servicemen recruited in the rural areas of Britain who would have the requisite agricultural knowledge and experience as well as the willingness and determination to

succeed on a farm. In order to ensure success he asked that arrangements be made with local farmers to take on inexperienced as well as experienced farmers for a twelve month period.<sup>99</sup> Scammell continued to maintain that the lack of the necessary passage money was still the most inhibiting factor to the entire programme of ex-soldier migration. But he was pleased that the Canadian government upheld its policy of waiving the monetary regulations for new arrivals undertaking agricultural employment or occupations deemed as special circumstances.<sup>100</sup>

The outbreak of war in August 1914 effectively ended the NMEL's operations but not before a total of 2,388 men, women and children had emigrated to the Dominions under the league's auspices.<sup>101</sup> Canada remained the favoured Dominion and it would seem that the Canadian government did more than any other Dominion to assist its ex-soldiers and imperial veterans. Similarly, Canada benefitted most by the recruitment of these professional soldiers into its permanent force. The cooperation displayed between 1900 and 1914 by the Canadian and Imperial governments on a small-scale, soldier migration programme was commendable because it demonstrated their commitment to maintain a healthy imperial defence policy. The use by both governments of a philanthropic organisation to promote imperial defence was also significant for it demonstrated official willingness to use private means to meet specialised emigration requirements. This occurred at a time when the British government steadfastly refused to intervene in the promotion of everyday emigration.

However, the NMEL's achievements must not be overstated. Despite its elaborate network of local, voluntary committees and the endorsements from many prominent imperialists throughout the empire, it operated on a shoestring and failed to secure steadfast and large-scale official support. Moreover, it failed to overcome Britain's commitment to laissez-faire. Indeed, the fear of a European war and the need to keep military reserves at home was the British government's overriding concern which, in the final analysis, was the greatest single factor limiting the NMEL's operations. In the end, it did little more than assist in recruiting a few specialists for the Canadian army. Nonetheless, its activities highlighted the growing importance some elements of Edwardian society were taking in the welfare of the empire's soldiery. With the advent of war in August 1914, that concern was intensified and redirected into new channels.

## ENDNOTES

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3. W. L. Morton, The Kingdom of Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1963), p. 40; W. J. Eccles, Canada Under Louis XIV 1663-1701 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1964), pp. 46-52; Kenneth McNaught, The Pelican History of Canada (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 29; Robert England, 'Discharged and Disbanded Soldiers in Canada Prior to 1914', Canadian Historical Review, XXVII (1946), pp. 1-2.
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5. England, pp. 4-12.
6. Patrick Colquhoun, Treatise on the Wealth, Power and Resources of the British Empire in every quarter of the World 2nd ed., 1815, pp. 422-31; R. Koebner, Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 292.
7. Public Records Office, London, (hereafter PRO), Colonial Office Papers (hereafter CO), CO 43/23, Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, to Drummond, 20 March and 31 May 1815. A. S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., n.d.), pp. 592-93; W. A. B. Douglas, 'The Blessings of the Land: Naval Officers in Upper Canada, 1815-1841', in Adrian Preston and Peter Dennis, eds., Swords and Covenants (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1976), pp. 42-73.
8. R. G. Riddell, 'A Study in the Land Policy of the Colonial Office, 1763-1855', Canadian Historical Review, XVIII, 4 (1937), p. 394.
9. Ibid., p. 393.
10. Helen I. Cowan, British Emigration to North America, 1783-1837 (Toronto: University of Toronto Library, 1928), pp. 65-95; George F. Playter, 'An Account of Three Military Settlements in Eastern Ontario - Perth, Lanark and Richmond, 1815-20', Ontario Historical Society, Papers and Records, XX (1923), pp. 98-104; Martell, pp. 77-8.
11. A. R. M. Lower, 'Immigration and Settlement in Canada, 1812-1820', Canadian Historical Review, III, 1 (March 1922), p. 40.
12. Martell, p. 75.

13. J. K. Johnson, 'The Chelsea Pensioners in Upper Canada', Ontario History, LIII, 4 (1961), p. 274.
14. Ibid., p. 276. Johnson estimates that 4,000 veterans commuted their pensions. The lion's share, 3,200, emigrated to British North America while the remaining 800 travelled to the Australian colonies.
15. Ibid., pp. 279-85. Governor Aylmer of Quebec condemned the pensioner settlement scheme on the grounds that the men lacked application and resourcefulness having squandered their commuted pensions. 'It has been found generally that these men are persons of irregular and disorderly habits and extremely improvident in matters connected with their own welfare'. PRO, War Office Papers (hereafter WO), WO 43/542/part 2/ff. 149, Aylmer to the Secretary of the Treasury, 10 July 1832; ibid., ff. 146-7, Aylmer to Viscount Goderich, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, 20 August 1832.
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17. For a detailed examination of the Albany settlement see I. E. Edwards, The 1820 Settlers in South Africa (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1934). The colonial defence argument of Miss Edwards is re-examined in an excellent study of early nineteenth century British emigration policy by H. J. M. Johnston, British Emigration Policy 1815-1830 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
18. T. R. H. Davenport, South Africa: A Modern History (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1987), pp. 43-4; Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson eds., The Oxford History of South Africa, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), I, pp. 278-79.
19. Wilson and Thompson, I, pp. 281-83; British Parliamentary Papers (hereafter BPP), nos. 2202 and 2352 of 1857 and no. 389 of 1858.
20. Ibid.
21. Nicholas Mansergh, The Commonwealth Experience, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), I, p. 53 and pp. 145-6.
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23. W. L. Morton, The Critical Years, 1857-1873 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), p. 250; Correlli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1984), p. 123; R. Shannon, Gladstone, I. 1809-1865 (London: Methuen, 1982).
24. Morton, The Critical Years, pp. 250-51.
25. A. P. Thornton, The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1985), p. 24.
26. Morton, The Critical Years, p. 250; Stacey, Canada and the British Army, pp. 207-8.
27. A. F. J. Artibise, Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 105.

28. Canada, Debates of the House of Commons (hereafter Debates), 1885, IV, p. 3376.
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30. After an extensive search of the Parliamentary Papers and Debates of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Australian States nothing was found which indicated the topic had been discussed at all.
31. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (hereafter NZPD), CXXVI, 1903, p. 258.
32. Canada, Debates, 1902, I, col. 1446 and II, col. 3831.
33. Ibid., 1906-07, I, cols. 730-6.
34. Ibid., 1906-07, I, cols. 733-6 and IV, col. 7542; 1908, I, col. 1110-11; 1909, I, col. 1590.
35. Statutes of Canada, 7-8 Edward VII, Chapter 67.
36. Ibid., 7-8 Edward VII, Chapter 67; 2 George V, Chapter 52, 1912.
37. Canada, Debates, 1911-1912, IV, col. 6450. It was revealed by Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior (1905-11), that as from the enactment of the Volunteer Bounty Act in July of 1908 to the end of 1909 only two thirds of the land certificates remained in the hands of veterans or their families. This constituted 1,257,600 acres out of 2,136,960 acres which had been allotted so far. Canada, Debates, 1909-1910, II, col. 2144.
38. Morton and Martin, pp. 424-25. Of the 1,063,360 acres of scrip available in Alberta 1,017,303 acres were patented by land speculators.
39. Statutes of Canada, 9-10 Edward VII, I, Chapter 60; 3-4 George V, Chapter 55; Canada, Debates, 1912-1913, I, col. 1097-98.
40. Canada, Debates, 1906-07, I, cols. 736-39.
41. National Archives of Canada (hereafter NA), Immigration Branch files of the Department of the Interior, RG 76, vol. 202, f. 87046, Part 1, Memorandum, J. A. Smart to Frank Pedley, Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, 29 July 1899.
42. Ibid., J. G. Colmer, Secretary of the High Commission, to Pedley, 29 August 1899.
43. Ibid., 'Classes Wanted in Canada', Canadian emigration pamphlet, 1902, pp. 1-3; W. T. R. Preston, Commissioner of Emigration in London, to Pedley, 18 October 1902.
44. Ibid., Willard to Smart, 18 February 1903; Smart to Willard, 23 February 1903. Sir Alfred Jones of the Beaver Line Steamers offered reduced passages to British Army reservists but evidently Canadian authorities did not respond. Ibid., Jones to Preston, 11 October 1902.



45. Ibid., Preston to Smart, 8 May 1902; Preston to Pedley, 8 May 1902; Preston to Major-General Synge, 10 June 1902; Preston to Pedley, 30 June 1902.
46. Ibid., Preston to Pedley, 8 May 1902.
47. Ibid., Smart to Preston, 20 May 1902; Pedley to Preston, 11 June 1902.
48. Ibid., Col. L. J. Pinault, Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence, to W. D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, 9 November 1905.
49. Ibid., J. Obed Smith, Commissioner of Immigration in Winnipeg, to Scott, Ottawa, 18 January 1906; Thomas Morgan to the Secretary of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, 8 July 1909; F. Waite to the Officer Paying Pensions, Ottawa, 10 October 1909; Smith to Scott, 20 August 1909.
50. Ibid., W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, to Colonel E. Fiset, Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence, 23 October 1909; Fiset to Cory, 19 November 1909; Cory to Fiset, 3 January 1910; Scott to Smith, 5 January 1910.
51. Ibid., Smith to Scott, 17 and 28 January 1910.
52. Ibid., Smith to Scott, 17 January 1910; Scott to Fiset, 1 and 16 February 1910; Fiset to Scott, 14 February 1910; Smith to Scott, 1 March 1910.
53. Quotation cited in Geoffrey Searle, The Quest for National Efficiency (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1971), p. 39.
54. Ibid., p. 54; For an examination of the intellectual climate see Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).
55. For a detailed discussion on the development of British social imperialist doctrine and politics see H. John Field, Toward a Programme of Imperial Life (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (New York: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968); Searle, The Quest for National Efficiency.
56. H. L. Malchow, 'Trade Unions and Emigration in Late Victorian England: A National Lobby for State Aid', Journal of British Studies, XV, 2 (Spring 1978), pp. 92-116; H. L. Malchow, Population Pressures: Emigration and Government in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain (Palo Alto, California: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship Inc., 1979); Desmond Glynn, 'Exporting Outcast London': Assisted Emigration to Canada, 1886-1914, Histoire sociale - Social History, XV, 29 (May 1982), pp. 209-38.
57. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, 'Objects of the Naval and Military Emigration League', (1910), p. 4. The underlying motive behind the NMEL's formation was the promotion of imperial defence through philanthropy. The problem with the majority of ex-servicemen, according to the NMEL, was that they were relatively unskilled and upon receiving their discharge were thrown immediately into an overcrowded, competitive labour market. At the 'stroke of a pen', the soldier was transformed from a 'warrior' into the ranks of the unemployed. It was a 'pathetic tragedy', a 'penalty of patriotism', and quite undeserving of men who had sacrificed the best years of their lives serving the colours. It was understood that openings existed in the Dominions for eager but unskilled ex-servicemen who

were willing to work in the rural districts of Australia as boundary riders, stockmen, station hands, cooks, handymen or agricultural labourers. Canada reportedly offered employment for discharged soldiers as city or mounted police, elevator attendants, janitors, caretakers, chauffeurs, stablemen, grooms, bank messengers, commissionaires, conductors, railway navvies, agricultural labourers and 'places of trust generally'. These were hardly jobs aimed at improving imperial defence, but the Canadian government did make use of the NMEL in cooperation with the War Office in securing work for time-expired men for the Canadian army. The Standard of Empire, 16 December 1910 and 3 July 1913; NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Interim Report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (February 1911); E. T. Scammell to Arthur Hawkes, 15 January 1912, published in Hawkes, Special Report on Immigration dealing mainly with Co-operation Between the Dominion and Provincial Governments and the Movement of People from the United Kingdom to Canada (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1912), pp. 87-9. Hereafter as Hawkes, Special Report; House of Lords Record Office (hereafter HLRO), Lord Beaverbrook Papers, BBK B49, John Cosgrove to Max Aitken, 8 May 1912.

58. PRO, WO 163/12, Precis no. 369, November 1907, p. 172; Army Council, 97th meeting, 7 November 1907, p. 25.

59. Ibid., Precis no. 369, p. 172.

60. Ibid., Army Council, 97th meeting, 7 November 1907, p. 172.

61. PRO, WO 163/14, Precis no. 442, p. 144.

62. Ibid., p. 145.

63. Ibid., Army Council, 120th meeting, 1 November 1909, p. 15.

64. NA, Governor-General's Office, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, Fiset to Military Secretary of Governor-General of Canada, 23 September 1910, 28 October 1910 and 10 February 1912; The Record, (Sherbrooke, Quebec), 18 September 1912; Canada, 1 June 1912; NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, 'Under One Flag', Canadian Pacific Railway immigration pamphlet, 1913.

65. NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, E. W. D. Ward to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 July 1910.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. PRO, CO 532/16/5190, Scammell to Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 February 1909.

69. Ibid., minute by Lucas, February 1909.

70. United Kingdom, House of Commons Debates (hereafter Hansard), Hansard, fifth series, XIV, 1909, cols. 1787-88.

71. Ibid.

72. NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, Ward to Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 July 1910.

73. BPP, Cd. 2991, Report of the Committee on Civil Employment of Ex-Soldiers and Sailors; together with Appendix (1906); Cd. 2992, Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee on Civil Employment of Ex-Soldiers and Sailors; together with Digest and Index (1906); Cd. 2978, Departmental Committee on Agricultural Settlements in British Colonies: Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed to Consider Mr. Rider Haggard's Report on Agricultural Settlements in British Colonies, I (1906).
74. PRO, WO 163/18, Precis no. 625, pp. 47-8.
75. Ibid., Army Council, 148th meeting, 23 January 1913.
76. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1911), p. 7.
77. Royal Commonwealth Society Archives (hereafter RCSA), T. E. Sedgwick Papers, report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1912), p. 5.
78. NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, F. Jarvis, Acting Deputy Minister of Militia, to Military Secretary of Governor-General of Canada, 29 April 1913; RCSA, Sedgwick Papers, report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1912), pp. 2-5.
79. RCSA, Sedgwick Papers, report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1912), pp. 3-4.
80. A reprint of an article by Gerard Fiennes entitled, 'Old Soldiers of the Empire' which appeared in the Pall Mall Gazette, 9 April 1912.
81. 'Objects of the Naval and Military Emigration League' (1910), p. 4.
82. RCSA, Sedgwick Papers, copy of an undated appeal for funds by the Naval and Military Emigration League.
83. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scammell to Walter Scott, Premier of Saskatchewan, 17 August 1912; Saskatchewan Archives Board (hereafter SAB), Scammell to Premier Scott, 29 November 1912; Premier Scott to Scammell, 19 December 1912; Scammell to Premier Scott, 23 December 1912, Walter Scott Papers, M1-IV-92(3), pp. 41170-73 and pp. 41177-80. To avoid confusion in the text and footnotes between the two Scotts, W. D. Scott, the federal civil servant, will be cited simply as Scott while Premier Walter Scott will always be cited as Premier Scott.
84. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scammell to Robert Rogers, Minister of the Interior (1911-1912), 29 October 1912.
85. SAB, 'Particulars and Proposals in regard to the Immigration of Ex-service Men from the United Kingdom submitted by E. T. Scammell, Honorary Secretary of the Naval and Military Emigration League, to the Hon. the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa', Scott Papers, M1-IV-92(3); NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scammell to Rogers, 29 October 1912.
86. Ibid., Scammell to W. J. Roche, Minister of the Interior (1912-1917), 14 November 1912.
87. Ibid., Scammell to Scott, 19 November 1912.
88. Ibid., Scott to Cory, 7 May 1912.

89. NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, Fiset to Military Secretary of Governor-General, 20 April 1912.
90. Ibid., E. F. Jarvis, Acting Deputy Minister of Militia, to Military Secretary of Governor-General, 8 June 1911; Fiset to Military Secretary, 20 April 1912.
91. NA, RG 76, vol. 202, f. 87046, part 1, T. Southworth, Director of Colonisation, Toronto, to Scott, 17 January 1903.
92. Ibid., vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scott to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior (1905-10), 10 December 1910; Scott to Cory, 31 October 1913.
93. Ibid., Cory memorandum, 12 January 1914. During 1913, 418 ex-servicemen arrived in Canada under the auspices of the league; 104 made it to Canada under their own means, and 198 of the 314 who received landing permits from the London immigration office were assisted by league funds. The largest number of ex-servicemen, 198, entered the Canadian military forces. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Smith to Scott, 16 February 1914.
94. Ibid., vol. 202, f. 87046, part 1, Scott to Smith, 6 March 1910; E. Terrill, Government Employment Agent, Wooler Ontario, to Scott, 25 April 1910.
95. Ibid., vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scott to Cory, 31 October 1913.
96. Ibid., Scott to Cory, 24 February 1914; Scott to Smith, 11 November 1913; Scott to Smith, 5 December 1913.
97. Ibid., Scott to a Mr. Mitchell, 18 December 1913; Scott to Cory, 24 February 1914; Cory to Scott, 27 February 1914; Smith to Scammell, 20 March 1914; Scott to Smith, 1 April 1914.
98. Ibid., interview between Scammell, Scott, Smith and the London representatives of the Provincial governments, 19 March 1914.
99. Ibid.
100. The Standard of Empire, 3 July 1913; NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, interview between Scammell et al., 19 March 1914.
101. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1913). The NMEL was absorbed by another ex-servicemen's association founded in 1917, the Comrades of the Great War.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **LAISSEZ FAIRE TO STATE INTERVENTION: EMPIRE MIGRATION, SOLDIER SETTLEMENT AND BRITISH WARTIME INITIATIVE 1880-1922**

'Emigration is in itself only a private affair; it does not, as such, concern Governments'.

J. R. Seeley, imperial publicist and historian, 1885.<sup>1</sup>

The Victorian era was the great age of social reform and the development of a middle-class social consciousness. Rapid industrialisation transformed a predominantly rural agricultural society into a highly urbanised industrial society. The transformation was certainly not smooth or without its victims. Mass unemployment, civil unrest, abject poverty and class struggle seriously threatened to snap the existing social order. Unemployment, in particular, was seen as industrial society's most frightening disease because from it a whole host of other social maladies was spawned. Increasingly, the empire was seen as a possible panacea for Britain's economic and social disorders.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of limited state-aided imperial migration, as we have seen, was first developed in the post-Napoleonic period as an experiment to relieve post-war economic distress. Despite its lack-lustre success as a policy, ideologically it continued to generate a powerful hold over a small group of influential philanthropists and officials. During the 1820s and 1830s the emigration programmes of such enthusiasts as Robert Wilmot Horton, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (1822-28), and Edward Gibbon Wakefield received a great deal of public interest. Both, in their own particular way, firmly believed that government-sponsored emigration was an effective instrument for relieving the stress on Britain's social fabric.<sup>3</sup> Early Victorian 'friendly societies', and by the 1860s trade unions, began to shift their attention from organisation benefits being used to pay for emigration assistance to the active participation of the state. The mid-Victorian period also witnessed several large public campaigns by trade unionists and working-class

agitators who were determined to force the government to adopt subsidised emigration for the unemployed.<sup>4</sup> The government, committed to laissez-faire, remained unmoved and allowed the public agitation to fizzle out.

Despair erupted into mob violence when demonstrators, protesting against unemployment, rioted in Trafalgar Square in February 1886. The unemployment crisis of the 1880s and the intense trade union militancy which resulted once again brought state-aided emigration to the public forum. The formation of the National Association by a group of London-based philanthropists and clergymen in 1883 signalled the last large-scale popular front for state-aided emigration. Supporting the National Association were various industrial, craft and agricultural union leaders who were convinced that state-aided emigration was the answer to the severe economic distress their members were experiencing.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the 1880s witnessed a proliferation of philanthropic organisations who saw emigration as the solution to the unemployment issue. Headquartered in London, these societies were closely associated with the wave of liberal reform which was sweeping Britain. There was another dimension. The campaign for imperial federation was launched at the same time and although there were no direct links between these societies and the imperial federation movement there were indications that a handful of these philanthropic societies were committed to promoting imperial emigration as a means of reinforcing imperial solidarity.<sup>6</sup>

The Trafalgar Square riots sufficiently shook the government from its usual state of suspended animation to create the Emigrants' Information Office (EIO) in October 1886. It was seen as a victory by the emigration lobby who regarded the new institution as a vital first step in increased government participation in emigration. The National Association eagerly anticipated the expansion of the EIO's responsibilities from an information bureau to an emigration promotion agency. Unfortunately for the enthusiasts their optimistic assumptions were short-lived as the British government steadfastly refused to subsidise emigration. Politically, the EIO was simply a bureaucratic palliative designed to satiate the appetite of the emigration lobby; its sole function being 'to ascertain and publish facts'.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, once the emigration issue was thus officially recognised and formalised into a branch of government, the influence of extra-parliamentary organisations such as the National Association was instantly undermined.

Public agitation for state-aided emigration continued in the late 1880s, but the emigration lobby was surprised when the government announced the appointment of a select committee on colonisation in December 1888. The committee's mandate was limited to the investigation of Scottish crofter emigration and the progress of continuing colonial settlement experiments. Nonetheless delighted, the emigration lobby immediately tried to expand the investigatory scope of the select committee and secure significant representation. It was successful and the committee's terms of reference were widened to include the desirability of creating additional emigration machinery.<sup>8</sup>

The hearings dragged on for three years. When the final report was at last submitted in March 1891, the committee concluded that no grounds existed for advocating a state-aided emigration programme.<sup>9</sup> It did, however, recommend an increase in the EIO's operating grant. The report fell far short of the expectations of most emigrationists. The few active steps advocated by the committee were presented in an unassertive manner and lacked unanimity or urgency. This sounded the death knell of the National Association which disappeared shortly afterwards.<sup>10</sup> Falling unemployment induced by economic revival rather than government intransigence, however, probably had more to do with its disappearance. Throughout the 1890s a brightening economic picture continued to relieve pressure for state-aided emigration. The issue received little further public attention until after 1902.

Meanwhile, the officials at the EIO consistently and doggedly resisted all demands by private individuals and public lobbies for state-aided emigration between 1886 and 1914. The dictum of neither encouraging nor discouraging emigration remained lodged in the minds of successive EIO chairmen. Charles Lucas, testifying in front of the select committee on colonisation in 1889, did not regard emigration as a remedy for over-population. Emigration should be allowed to take its natural course, he contested, without state interference or involvement.<sup>11</sup> In 1907 his successor, Henry Lambert, reaffirmed the EIO's commitment to supplying impartial and trustworthy information. He too emphasised the Imperial government's neutral stance of neither promoting nor deterring people from emigrating. 'That intention has been steadily carried out, and it has never assisted emigration by the grant of free passages or any other pecuniary assistance'.<sup>12</sup> With the advent of war in 1914 official policy had not changed.

Despite the government's determination to resist pleas for a

state-aided emigration policy they did not subside, and in fact obtained an increasingly imperial flavour in the aftermath of the Boer War. There were a number of reasons, both domestic and imperial. Unemployment once again confronted the British government after the conclusion of the Boer War and became one of the most politically contentious domestic issues until the outbreak of World War I. The British economy experienced a steep decline immediately following the Boer War which coincided with a dramatic surge in the Canadian economy and to a lesser extent in the Australian economy as well.<sup>13</sup> The United States, previously the largest recipient of British emigrants in the nineteenth century, was thought to be filling up and therefore not as attractive as in the past. This led to a shift of British emigrants from the United States to the empire, coupled by a similar shift in investments which accentuated employment opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, unemployment was fundamental to the problem of national efficiency.<sup>15</sup> Imperial integration through assisted migration now became a prominent demand for many social imperialists. The post-war emigration boom re-animated a number of British philanthropic emigration societies established during the unemployment crisis of the 1880s, some of which belonged to the social imperialist faction of the new reform movement. 'Emigration', pronounced one society, 'is the imperial solution to the national problem of the unemployed'.<sup>16</sup> More importantly, emigration was a means of enhancing imperial solidarity and economic security in a period of diplomatic flux and growing international insecurity.

These concerns were reflected at the imperial level. Australian representatives at the Colonial Conference of 1907 introduced a resolution advocating that British emigrants be encouraged to proceed to British colonies rather than foreign destinations.<sup>17</sup> The resolution was aimed primarily at redirecting the flow of British emigration to the Dominions from the United States and was significant because it marked the first time emigration had been tabled at a Colonial Conference. Emigration had finally reached the main agenda of imperial affairs. The resolution was unanimously endorsed.

The Australian initiative was significant for several other reasons. First, it demonstrated a moderate change in attitude by the Australian government toward the value of immigrants. Persistent opposition by organised labour and perennial drought had severely restricted emigration to Australia in the latter part of the nineteenth



century. But Canada's highly successful propaganda campaign had clearly demonstrated to her sister Dominions the economic benefits of a well orchestrated immigration policy.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, white Australians feared being engulfed by a mushrooming Asian population which wanted access to Australia. In their determination to exclude Asians from their shores, they implemented tighter controls within their already highly controversial 'White Australia' policy.<sup>19</sup> The exclusion of 'coloured' immigration through the implementation of stricter entry requirements for non-whites was not enough, however. If the 'White Australia' policy was to be effective it had to be supplemented by a substantial inflow of British settlers. Financial assistance for British settlers, shelved by the various Australian colonies during the 1870s, was renewed by several of them just prior to the Boer War with encouraging results. This policy was maintained with increased determination by the majority of the newly federated Australian states after 1902.<sup>20</sup>

The redirection of British settlers to the Dominions from the United States between 1902 and 1914 heartened social imperialists and imperial federationists alike. In their view the empire's security depended upon a strong and vigorous population; people were the empire's most valuable asset. The loss of British subjects to territories outside the British flag remained a grave problem for some who condemned the British government for allowing its citizens to leave the country for foreign shores. Imperial authorities were charged as 'guilty of a wanton and suicidal disregard of the future welfare of the community'.<sup>21</sup> One of the government's sternest critic's was the Royal Colonial Institute (RCI) which coordinated and led the campaign to involve the British government directly in assisted emigration.

## SECTION 2: THE ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE

Imperial migration had always been a prominent issue on the agenda of the RCI and one in which it 'took a consistent and constructive interest'.<sup>22</sup> Established in 1868, it had attempted to raise public awareness of the advantages of redirecting a larger share of British emigrants to destinations within rather than outside the empire. Growing in confidence, ability and prestige, by the 1880s the RCI had become an important organisation for imperial enthusiasts, and by 1912 it enjoyed 'a certain influence in official quarters'.<sup>23</sup> But it was

after the Boer War, and especially after the formation in 1910 of its Standing Emigration Committee representing a variety of voluntary emigration agencies and organisations, that the RCI assumed a leading public role.

It was in the summer of 1910 that the RCI eagerly set out to become the leading voice on migration matters. The Council, the governing body of the RCI, agreed to a proposal submitted by two of its leading members that it convene an emigration conference. The RCI was determined that the conference bring together the widest cross-section of private, public and government agencies involved with emigration. The general objective of the conference was twofold: the diversion to the Dominions of the flow of British emigrants currently going outside the empire, and migration between the overseas Dominions and Great Britain generally. Subjects tabled for discussion ranged from the various schemes of colonisation available, the methods employed by the emigration societies, the work of the Dominion governments and their emigration agencies and the Imperial government's position on emigration. Finally, and most importantly, it was suggested that the British government be pressured to call a 'subsidiary' conference on emigration to run parallel with the forthcoming Imperial Conference of 1911. It was hoped that the views, proposals and resolutions formulated at the subsidiary conference would be submitted to the larger Imperial Conference.<sup>24</sup>

Foremost in the organisers' minds was the intense desire to encourage greater cooperation between the numerous emigration societies and to increase their effectiveness and efficiency as lobbyists. They argued that this was the best way of securing united action and would prevent, if not eliminate, a needless duplication of effort. It was a sound strategy, and combined with the desire to find out the Dominion governments' relationship with public and philanthropic efforts, was a step in the right direction.

The most crucial item on the agenda was the Imperial government's attitude toward emigration. Invitations were sent to the Colonial Office, Local Government Board, Board of Trade and the Home Office, all of which were declined.<sup>25</sup> When the RCI's invitation was first received, the Colonial Office was unsure if it should accept the offer. It quickly emerged that the Colonial Office wanted to avoid direct representation at the conference and it was decided that someone from the EIO should attend strictly as an observer. The Colonial Office

would get all the benefits of representation but 'would not be committed in any way which would appear to involve a Government emigration policy'.<sup>26</sup>

The conference began on 30 May 1910 with F. G. A. Butler, chairman of the EIO, leading the three-man government delegation. A wide variety of emigration societies and agencies attended achieving the representative cross-section the RCI had hoped to obtain.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, besides the Imperial government, the Dominion High Commissioners and Agents-General, who were invited, also declined to attend. The absence of any official government representation was disappointing but did not dampen the RCI's enthusiasm or conviction. As expected, the Imperial government came in for searing criticism. Butler, however, was unmoved and levelled an unflattering broadside of his own about the conference to his superiors at the Colonial Office. The conference, he scornfully remarked, 'afforded a splendid opportunity' to the various societies and agencies 'of which full advantage was taken, for the blowing of their own trumpets'.<sup>28</sup> This resulted in little attention being paid to the real emigration issues and, the object of the conference 'was saved from absolute sterility' by a resolution establishing a standing committee on emigration at the RCI.<sup>29</sup> Harsh words, perhaps, but there was a ring of truth to them.

Nonetheless, the RCI was pleased with its accomplishments. A forum for discussion had been established and many issues had been clarified. If nothing else, opinions had been aired in public which provided the foundation for a united front and a common policy, and this augured well for greater cooperation between the various societies. Equally important from a public relations standpoint was the prominence the conference gave to the RCI as the leading advocate of greater philanthropic cooperation and state involvement in emigration. With the Standing Emigration Committee a forum had been created whereby the momentum generated at the 1910 conference would be maintained.

In May 1911 the Standing Emigration Committee released a report which coincided with the opening sessions of the Imperial Conference. The report emphasised the growing urgency of the emigration issue and reiterated demands made at the 1910 emigration conference that the question of imperial migration receive the Imperial Conference's fullest attention as part of the main conference agenda or through a subsidiary conference. Although informative and well-timed it proved ineffective. Imperial migration appeared on the conference agenda but the delegates

simply reaffirmed the 1907 Colonial Conference resolution of encouraging British emigrants to proceed to the Dominions. No change of policy was deemed necessary because of the unprecedented number of emigrants which were streaming to the Dominions on their own initiative.<sup>30</sup>

Disappointed by the cursory treatment imperial migration received the RCI remained determined to get its views across. An excellent opportunity presented itself when a Dominions Royal Commission (DRC) was appointed in April 1912 to investigate the natural resources and trade of the overseas Dominions. The RCI argued that to ignore the examination of the empire's human resources, a key factor in imperial trade and development, would be a grave oversight which would limit severely the scope and impact of the investigation.<sup>31</sup> The Imperial government agreed and added imperial migration to the DRC's agenda. However, the outbreak of war in August 1914 interrupted the DRC's investigations and blunted the RCI's initial expectations.

## SECTION 2.1: SOLDIER SETTLEMENT, THE FIRST INITIATIVE

The RCI was not deterred from its purpose by the outbreak of war. As early as November 1914, the Standing Emigration Committee asked to send an official deputation to Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Colonial Office promptly poured cold water on this initiative by playing down the importance of post-war emigration in general. Officials were certain that the Imperial government would not commit itself to any policy pronouncements until the final recommendations of the DRC had been tabled. 'An additional reason for going slow', minuted Butler, 'is that no one can now foresee whether it will be desirable to encourage in any way the emigration of men after the war'.<sup>32</sup> Emigration, another Colonial Office official remarked, was not one of the first but one of the last expedients the government could implement. The nation could not afford to bleed itself of vital manpower during reconstruction. And soldier resettlement was 'only a small fractional part of the huge and infinitely more complex problems' of imperial post-war population adjustment. What was certain was that the RCI initiative could not be sanctioned and it was condemned by the bureaucrats as premature, inopportune and mischievous.<sup>33</sup>

Similar responses awaited the RCI from the chairman of the DRC, Lord D'Abernon and C. F. Rey, general manager of the Labour Exchanges

Department at the Board of Trade. Both agreed that the demobilised soldier faced a grave uncertainty about his future at the end of the war. D'Abernon predicted that a small number of soldiers could be considered for emigration projects during the war but these would be men who had been invalided out of the services. In turn they would have to be both 'willing and fit' for emigration as far as their injuries would allow.<sup>34</sup> Rey was even less encouraging. He was correct when he stated that the post-war labour situation was highly complex because it involved the transfer of labour from industries connected with war work to those associated with normal conditions. Moreover, it was too early to predict where demands and shortages in the labour market would occur after the war. Therefore, it was premature, explained Rey, to discuss a post-war emigration strategy geared towards unemployed ex-servicemen. Rey informed the RCI that the government was unlikely to take the initiative for fear of public criticism; that 'after the soldiers had fought for their country, the government wanted to get rid of them'.<sup>35</sup>

Preoccupied with the immediate demands of the war it was obvious that the Colonial Office had not the time, inclination or enthusiasm for such an issue. It maintained that the Imperial government had given no indication of changing its pre-war policy of 'neither encouraging [nor] discouraging emigration' after the war.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the Colonial Office was unsure whether post-war emigration even fell within its jurisdiction. The Board of Trade, it suggested, with its network of 400 employment exchanges nationwide, was better suited to undertake administrative responsibility once the government had chosen a policy. Officials of the Board of Trade were inclined to agree.<sup>37</sup>

Undeterred, the RCI pushed ahead for an audience. Its president at this crucial juncture, the fourth Earl Grey, threw his customary energy and determination into the fray. An ardent social reformer with a keen personal interest in emigration, and a passionate disciple of imperial unity, Grey provided the RCI with strong leadership and unquestioned prestige during his five years in office (1912-17).<sup>38</sup> He was deeply concerned about the potential threat posed by large numbers of idle, restless, unemployed ex-servicemen on the nation's social and political stability after the war. Alarmed by recent political developments in Britain since the turn of the century, in particular the rise of socialism, Grey found a receptive audience at the RCI who shared the same deep concerns over the 'organic' nature of British society and empire. He and his RCI colleagues feared that demobilisation would

bring unacceptably high levels of unemployment and ensuing political unrest which would accelerate socialism to the detriment of the status quo. 'It is obvious that when the war is over there will be thousands of ex-soldiers and sailors out of employment; industrious, disciplined men who if left to themselves may become a social and political menace'.<sup>39</sup> Like many others, he was convinced that the outdoor experience of British troops in the trenches would inculcate a strong spirit of adventure which 'will have taken so strong a hold as to make them most reluctant to return to the humdrum conditions of their old life'.<sup>40</sup> To harness this constructive but potentially dangerous energy and avert post-war political and social unrest, he advocated large-scale overseas soldier settlement projects which would guarantee work and a future for returning soldiers.

The first step was the creation of a central exchange in London where the various federal, provincial and state governments could advertise the number of men they would be prepared to put on the land.<sup>41</sup> A further possibility was the establishment of a central agency with powers to pool land throughout the empire for soldier settlement. Grey estimated that transportation costs to the Dominions, particularly to the Antipodes, would be the major expense for most soldier settlers and their families. However, if the Imperial government subsidised sea passages for 200,000 emigrants at £10 per person it was a small sum compared with the threatened political and social dangers unemployment posed to post-war Britain. He recognised that the Imperial authorities would feel squeamish about paying for the passage scheme 'because such action would be opposed to precedent which is against all State-aided emigration [but] I do not know that precedent counts for very much in these exceptional times'.<sup>42</sup>

The Colonial Office remained sceptical of large land settlement schemes. It cited the failure of Lord Milner's resettlement scheme in the Transvaal after the Boer War. The size and scale of these operations required enormous long-term financial resources. 'Who is to find the capital for any such large scheme of settlement?' asked Sir John Anderson, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Enormous sums were spent in S. Africa [with no result]....It is not enough to pay passages at £10 a head. That is but the beginning of it. The men of the New Army are practically all men who have been in regular...employment in this country, and if our industries are to be re-established on their former basis their services will be required here.

Will the Dominions thank us for the maimed veterans who cannot resume their former employment? Can we afford at the end of the war in addition to the capital required to repair the ravages, an enormous sum to effect a large settlement in the Dominions, and if so could it not be employed with as great [an] advantage to the Empire at home, say, in afforestation?<sup>43</sup>

These poignant remarks indicated the increasing resistance the RCI would encounter from the Colonial Office in the near future. At the same time, the Colonial Office was not blind to the fact that soldier resettlement schemes made 'good copy for the public Press' and anticipated that there would be 'considerable pressure later on for the adoption of some emigration or colonisation scheme'.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, the RCI organised its resources for another assault on Whitehall.

## SECTION 2.2: THE NEW OFFENSIVE

Despite the cold reception encountered by Grey at the Colonial Office in January 1915 the RCI spent the next four months organising and planning its next move. In early 1915 the Standing Emigration Committee was replaced by another committee chaired by Lord Grey with the very unmanageable title of the 'After the War' Empire Settlement and Rural Employment Committee. Later shortened to the Empire Land Settlement Committee (ELSC), the new committee was given the dual mandate of investigating both overseas and domestic soldier settlement and rural employment.<sup>45</sup> Anxious to cooperate with the new committee various individuals and organisations throughout the United Kingdom and the empire came forth with offers of assistance. Not content with these generous offers, the committee canvassed organisations it thought would be useful in its new campaign against Whitehall. These included the Veterans' Club, Evening News Soldiers' and Sailors Employment Bureau, 1914 War Society (Self-Help for Maimed Soldiers and Sailors), Never-Forget League, and the National Political League.<sup>46</sup> The intention was to find out the objects and aims of each group, league or organisation, investigate those which seemed best suited to cooperate with the RCI's soldier settlement strategy, provide mutual support and coordinate activities on a united front.

The committee resolved that Grey, armed with its soldier resettlement proposal, should call on Herbert Asquith, the Prime

Minister, to hear its views. The basis of the discussions was the organisation of a permanent Imperial Land Settlement Board.<sup>47</sup> Grey informed Asquith of the need for immediate action to deal with the thousands of discharged servicemen before the war ended, and affirmed that it was impossible for any private organisation to deal with 'so complex and urgent' a matter.<sup>48</sup> It needed a comprehensive examination by the Imperial government, either by existing machinery, such as the DRC, or by the newly established Imperial Land Settlement Board. The committee also noted that if the DRC could not consider overseas settlement in the absence of Dominion representation that it should seriously consider domestic soldier resettlement, even though it was outside the Commission's original terms of reference.

Asquith's reaction to Grey's request was to ascertain Colonial Office opinion.<sup>49</sup> Harcourt hesitated to give him specific advice on account of the fact that domestic soldier resettlement lay outside his jurisdiction.<sup>50</sup> However, Harcourt instructed Butler to forward the detailed Colonial Office minutes discussing Grey's letter to the Prime Minister for his consideration. Preoccupied with more important war work Asquith asked the Colonial Office to nominate a spokesman to meet the RCI deputation.<sup>51</sup> This was not what the ELSC had expected and it expressed its dismay to Grey at being referred to the newly-appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland. The committee felt that 'the Prime Minister had not quite appreciated the importance of the Deputation' and persuaded Grey to write a second personal appeal to Asquith requesting that the new Colonial Secretary, Bonar Law, and the President of the Board of Agriculture, Lord Selborne, meet with it. Reluctantly, Asquith asked Bonar Law to grant them an interview 'to heal L[or]d Grey's wounded amour propre'. Law agreed to meet the delegation on 22 July 1915, although the permanent officials at the Colonial Office thought it a complete waste of time.<sup>52</sup>

Law appeared sympathetic to the deputation's entreaties. However, he made it clear from the outset that he would make no commitment nor issue any policy statement. Privately, however, he supported the Colonial Office tenet that the RCI's initiatives were hasty, untimely and inappropriate. His carefully worded response was a masterful display of official intransigence sugared in a coating of public courtesy. Moreover, the discussion of overseas settlement was deflected by Law's emphasis on the Board of Agriculture's investigation of



domestic soldier colonisation.<sup>53</sup> The RCI went away empty handed.

Undaunted, the RCI persevered and kept post-war emigration and land settlement and particularly the needs of the ex-servicemen in the forefront of the public's attention. On 10 February 1916 they despatched Rider Haggard, imperial adventure novelist, agricultural reformer and active RCI member on a fact-finding mission to the Dominions to investigate their opinions of plans to assist ex-servicemen to settle in the overseas empire after the war. Privately, Bonar Law admitted that Haggard's mission might be useful. However, he refused to give Haggard official status and emphasised that the government could not underwrite the mission in any way for fear the Dominions might regard it as interference in their internal affairs.<sup>54</sup> In a private communication to Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, Governor-General of Australia, Bonar Law elaborated upon his reasons for refusing the RCI's request for official support. He feared that any official appointment would be considered premature by the Dominions who were already investigating land settlement and repatriation for themselves. 'I felt bound to reply that I could see no halfway house between recognising the mission officially and having nothing to do with it'.<sup>55</sup>

Privately, the Colonial Office bureaucrats treated the mission with their customary disdain and were much more precise about their feelings for Haggard and the RCI. One official, Edward Harding, secretary of the DRC and one who had witnessed first hand Haggard at work as a DRC commissioner, was not impressed at all. 'I think he is of the temperament which has very ordinary Imperial ideas, and thinks they are extraordinary. Perhaps that is the result of being a Novelist with a really keen imagination'.<sup>56</sup> Munro-Ferguson was even less charitable. He had worked with Haggard on a Royal Commission which had delved into land tenure, small holdings and their impact on British agriculture. He dismissed Haggard as having 'a purely theoretical knowledge of agriculture and seemed to me one of the least useful members of the Commission'.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, each Dominion was notified of Haggard's arrival, the private capacity of the mission was reiterated by the Colonial Office and the Governors-General were instructed to monitor his progress.

Why was the Colonial Office so hostile toward the RCI and its post-war emigration initiative? The higher echelons of the permanent civil service were a closed shop, if not an exclusive club, for the intellectually and educationally gifted. The intellectual calibre of

the Colonial Office staff was exceptionally high, maybe too high, but it was a poor substitute for administrative competency and it bred arrogance and a sense of effortless superiority which many outsiders found repugnant.<sup>58</sup> Imprisoned in its own environment by social, educational and administrative constraints the donnish behaviour displayed by the Colonial Office limited its ability to embark upon new and imaginative policy initiatives. Officials were 'habitually loathe to make abrupt decisions' and exposed the Colonial Office to charges of indifference to humanitarian and philanthropic interests alike.<sup>59</sup>

The Colonial Office often grew impatient and dismissive of such criticism and treated these groups with contempt. It saw itself as the final authority on questions of imperial significance, 'to which outside bodies with imperfect access to information could add little or nothing'.<sup>60</sup> The RCI was no exception. At the very least, departmental remarks were unflattering, unkind and unappreciative. Colonial Office officials placed 'little reliance' on the views and opinions expressed by the RCI. It was regarded simply as a gentlemen's club and was 'a wholly irresponsible body [which] has no connection with the Government or with the Dominions governments'.<sup>61</sup> Of all the permanent officials Sir John Anderson was the most caustic. He considered the RCI a nuisance and referred to it as a 'blatant talking shop' whose members did not impress him as those who inspired much confidence or could give worthwhile assistance on any imperial issue. 'Amateur enthusiasts or journalists', he snapped, 'are not helpful as a rule'.<sup>62</sup>

The impact of Haggard's mission and the overwhelming response he received in most of the Dominions far exceeded even the most optimistic RCI expectations. The Colonial Office was also surprised by its success.<sup>63</sup> Immediately upon Haggard's return in late July, the RCI began marshalling its forces for another assault on the government. Another deputation was formed and presented its views to Bonar Law and the President of the Board of Agriculture, Lord Crawford, on 10 August 1916. The deputation, led by the intrepid Grey, repeated its previous demand for the establishment of an Imperial Land Settlement Board and reiterated the importance of assisting those British ex-servicemen and their families who wanted to migrate to imperial destinations after the war. According to Grey, land settlement was receiving growing support as an instrument of repatriation and post-war reconstruction not only in Britain but throughout the empire. Therefore it was time to formulate an imperial policy. Once again Bonar Law's reply was warm and polite

but guarded.<sup>64</sup>

Almost simultaneously, the Reconstruction Committee, created in March 1916, requested the views of seven government departments including the Colonial Office on whether the government should encourage any form of emigration after the war.<sup>65</sup> The departments concerned unanimously accepted that if emigration were to be encouraged it must go to the Dominions, but they could agree on neither the principle itself nor the degree and type of assistance.<sup>66</sup> As for the Colonial Office, Terence Macnaghten, chairman of the EIO, acknowledged the importance that the Reconstruction Committee and the Board of Trade attached to post-war emigration, but he remained sceptical. 'We are still ignorant of what the post-war conditions will be', he commented in June 1916, 'and whether it will be right to encourage or discourage emigration, or simply to pursue the neutral policy of the period before the war'.<sup>67</sup> By August, however, he was more hesitant. 'I am not at all clear what our policy in this Office is towards emigration, and I have no notion what the policy of H.M.G. is likely to be'.<sup>68</sup> At least he now accepted that it was logical and 'safest for the Gov't to take the matter in hand, and guide such emigration...into the best channels'.<sup>69</sup>

Pressure from both inside and outside government to formulate some kind of policy became so intense during the summer of 1916 that the Colonial Office could no longer maintain its customary disdain for so-called amateur and uninformed opinion which had allowed it to evade the issue. In September 1916 Bonar Law finally decided that it was time to take some practical steps to deal with post-war ex-service migration. He emphasised the need to find openings at home for the largest number of British ex-servicemen. However, he admitted that some would emigrate no matter what kind of domestic arrangements were prepared. In order to ensure that they did not drift outside the imperial sphere 'from want of guidance and knowledge of the opportunities available to them in the Dominions' the first priority was the creation of a central authority to 'formulate plans and coordinate efforts'. What he specifically wanted from the Dominions was concrete and immediate information on the nature of their own land settlement and employment schemes for ex-servicemen.<sup>70</sup> The Colonial Office, however, remained circumspect and demonstrated its intense hostility to organised emigration by a determined rearguard action throughout the rest of 1916. While promising to establish a central body they plotted against attempts by the RCI to seek representation on it or to influence policy making.<sup>71</sup>

Attempts to circumvent the RCI failed, however, when political events overtook the Colonial Office's departmental machinations.

In December 1916 Walter Long replaced Bonar Law as Colonial Secretary when Lloyd George became Prime Minister. Unlike his predecessor, Long was truly interested in the emigration issue and proved eager to forge ahead. Reminding the Dominions of the urgency of the ex-service migration question, he prodded them (except New Zealand) for a response to Bonar Law's September telegram. The Canadian government promised an answer after the provincial premiers' conference in early January 1917. The Duke of Devonshire, Governor-General of Canada, reported that while the conference was interesting, revealing and provided a useful exchange of ideas, it had not arrived at any definite conclusions.<sup>72</sup> Australia, which was discussing the subject at an inter-state conference when Long's reminder arrived, also delayed its reply until January. It was more positive. British veterans would be granted unconditionally the same soldier settlement facilities as Australians. On the other hand South Africa had not come to a decision and indications were that when it did it would be polite, non-committal and strictly limited to helping South African veterans. Although the replies were mixed, Long was satisfied that the participation of British ex-servicemen in Dominion soldier settlement schemes was being discussed. The idea of a central authority to coordinate post-war ex-service migration, however, fell on indifferent ears.<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile, Long demanded the early formation of a consultative committee which would consider ex-servicemen and post-war migration, and he insisted that it should contain knowledgeable individuals from outside government.<sup>74</sup> To prepare for this Long appointed the emigration enthusiast Lord Tennyson as chairman of the Empire Settlement Committee. The committee that consequently took shape in early 1917 originally comprised twenty-five members, later expanded to thirty-three, representing a cross-section of British, Dominion, state and provincial governments. Several outside interests, including the Salvation Army were nominated to the committee.<sup>75</sup> The RCI was successfully denied official representation by the Colonial Office. However, indirect representation was achieved by the inclusion of Rider Haggard as a committee member.

The committee's brief was to make recommendations as to the steps the British government should take in constituting the central body to facilitate the supervision and assistance of post-war emigration and to

collate information that might be useful to intending emigrants and report on the necessary measures to be taken for settling ex-servicemen in the empire. Long had it in mind that, as he told Tennyson, the central body would probably emerge from his committee using the existing committee members.<sup>76</sup> The Tennyson committee agreed with the recommendations of the DRC's final report published in March but went one step further. The DRC supported the establishment of special machinery to assist ex-servicemen to select, purchase and settle on land in the overseas Dominions. It did not, however, mention free passage as part of the package.<sup>77</sup> The Tennyson committee, however, supported the principle of free passage to the Dominions for ex-servicemen and the provision of development capital for the various soldier land settlement schemes.<sup>78</sup>

Aware of the Tennyson committee's opinions and with the findings of the DRC before it, the Imperial War Cabinet, with little discussion, approved the New Zealand resolution that intending British emigrants be offered inducements to settle within the empire.<sup>79</sup> At last the British government officially endorsed the need of limited state intervention in imperial migration matters. However, it was a general statement of principle and made no specific reference to free passage for British ex-servicemen. The British cabinet was content to let the Colonial Office get on with drafting a post-war emigration policy based on the recommendations of the DRC and Tennyson committee reports. The permanent officials were however still convinced that British stock was needed at home. They regarded the development of post-war Britain as more important than overseas development, and they opposed any propaganda enticing ex-servicemen to emigrate to the Dominions. Instead, Macnaghten argued, priority should be given to 'an attractive land settlement and general development programme in the U.K.'<sup>80</sup> This is precisely what happened. The issue of free passage and overseas development assistance for British ex-servicemen after the war became submerged after April 1917 in the British government's pursuit of a domestic colonisation scheme and the Colonial Office's preoccupation with casting an all-encompassing emigration bill in 1918.

### SECTION 2.3: DOMESTIC SOLDIER SETTLEMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION

The chimera of a swift and speedy conclusion to the war drowned in the mud of Flanders. By the end of 1915 all combatants realised that their resources and manpower had to be mobilised for total war. Consequently, the state had to intervene in areas of social and economic policy hitherto confined to the domain of private initiative and enterprise. For many social imperialists the necessity of increased state intervention was perceived to be a tremendous political challenge which held out the need for action in the areas of social, economic and political reform after the war during post-war reconstruction. The return to normality therefore did not mean a mere restoration of British society to the days prior to 1914. Instead, the war provided an opportunity for the construction of a new social, economic and political order.<sup>81</sup>

The appalling casualty rates and the steady stream of wounded returning home were a daily reminder that it was becoming impossible for private charities and philanthropic organisations to cope with the enormous task of rehabilitation, retraining and re-employment of returning veterans. This prompted the British government in February 1915 to investigate these problems, in particular the employment and vocational opportunities available to disabled soldiers and sailors. The Murray committee, named after its chairman G. H. Murray and appointed by Herbert Samuel, President of the Local Government Board, recommended in May 1915 that it was the state's duty to assume absolute responsibility for the care of the war disabled. This included the restoration of their health, the provision of training facilities if they wished to pursue a new trade and assistance in securing employment. One solution which was brought to the committee's attention, and received its support, was the settlement of soldiers and sailors on the land.<sup>82</sup>

Indeed, home colonisation proved popular with British agricultural reformers and politicians alike. Naturally, patriotism permeated the demands for a domestic soldier settlement scheme. Many believed that small-scale farming operations offered returning veterans the best opportunity of leading a healthy, fulfilling and productive life. For the disabled soldier, even those stricken blind or infected with tuberculosis, it was believed that working outdoors aided the recuperative processes and restored one's pride and self-esteem.<sup>83</sup>

Patriotism aside, there were also important strategic, social and economic arguments for resettling British ex-servicemen on small holdings, such as increased agricultural self-sufficiency, enhanced revival of British agriculture, fortification of the social fabric against revolution and reinforced political stability. Landholding ex-servicemen, trained with the necessary agricultural skills, would prove a welcome addition to the long and noble traditions of the British yeoman, representative and defender of a stable rural society.<sup>84</sup>

Throughout 1915 and 1916 the Board of Agriculture received a growing number of enquiries from both within and outside Whitehall about the possibility of employing disabled veterans in agriculture and the establishment of small soldier settlement colonies. Lord Lucas, Selborne's predecessor at the Board of Agriculture, welcomed these enquiries because he firmly believed that disabled veterans could be used as a partial solution in relieving the chronic shortage of agricultural labour.<sup>85</sup> Another member of the Murray committee and a leading agricultural reformer, Leslie Scott, agreed. 'My own belief is that the open air life of soldiering will create quite a new impetus towards agricultural life....Should the demand be larger it will obviously have to be considered in close connection with the purely agricultural question of increasing our output from the land'.<sup>86</sup>

This was precisely what concerned many leading politicians and agricultural reformers. From a strategic standpoint, it was vital that Britain reduce its dependence on imported foodstuffs by increasing domestic food production. The threat of an unlimited submarine campaign, unleashed in 1917, clearly demonstrated Britain's vulnerable supply lines and emphasised the need for greater agricultural self-sufficiency. This was certainly apparent to Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, who stated that from a defence viewpoint Britain's 'Achilles heel' was her dependence on imported foodstuffs and raw materials. However, this important national objective could only be achieved by safeguarding the supply of agricultural labour. The plan to resettle British ex-servicemen on small holdings was therefore developed within this context. Soldiers, both disabled and able-bodied, were seen by some permanent officials, politicians and agricultural reformers as the vanguard of a new development designed to increase Britain's rural population and revitalise a flagging agricultural sector.<sup>87</sup>

It was Selborne's foresight and energy which brought the idea of

settling the disabled and discharged soldier on British farm land to the cabinet's attention.<sup>88</sup> He was committed to reconstruction and became one of the leading advocates for greater state control of the war effort. It was his insistence that the government promptly intervene to secure adequate wheat supplies at a fair price to the farmer which created a great deal of debate within Asquith's coalition government during the summer of 1915. Britain's dependence on imported food during the war was viewed by Selborne as 'a source of grave national weakness'.<sup>89</sup> But Selborne refused to be blinkered by wartime circumstances. He saw reconstruction as a positive force in shaping a new and vigorous post-war society. Twelve months at the Board of Agriculture (May 1915 to May 1916) had convinced him that the most contentious economic issue of British politics - tariff reform versus free trade - had to give way to the maintenance of the nation's 'welfare and safety'. This could only be achieved by 'something approaching a revolution in agricultural policy' which would ensure greater agricultural self-sufficiency.<sup>90</sup>

Selborne shared Scott's concern for the plight of the ex-servicemen and the possibility of employing them on the land. He appointed a departmental committee in July 1915, chaired by Harry Verney MP, a former Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Agriculture (1914-15). Its objective was to consider and report on the necessary steps to promote the settlement and employment on the land in England and Wales of disabled and discharged ex-servicemen.<sup>91</sup> Selborne agreed with his Parliamentary Secretary, F. D. Acland, that the entire matter was 'clearly one of extreme interest and difficulty'.<sup>92</sup> Sydney Olivier, Permanent Secretary at the Board of Agriculture, emphasised the importance of having experienced men on the committee. The committee's 'real work should not be theoretical...but practical and exploratory of the concrete material to be dealt with'.<sup>93</sup> The information, argued Olivier, should be gathered by those most directly concerned with the small holdings movement in Britain. In particular, men who had been closely associated with previous attempts at domestic colonisation and land settlement; experts who knew 'what kind of men, with what kind of assistance, and at what expense, can be settled upon such lands with any prospect of their becoming self-supporting'.<sup>94</sup> As far as Olivier was concerned one thing was certain: the government would be confronted with demands for some sort of home colonisation programme. It was never too early to prepare for such an eventuality. Selborne concurred and



stated that the Verney committee's recommendations should be completed for cabinet perusal as soon as possible.<sup>95</sup>

Early in March 1916 Asquith appointed a cabinet committee to consider whether land settlement should be included as part of the government's demobilisation policy. Meanwhile on 11 March Selborne presented a summary of the yet unpublished Verney committee recommendations to the cabinet.<sup>96</sup> He readily admitted that a state-sponsored land settlement scheme for returning soldiers would be expensive. But he warned his cabinet colleagues that the Dominions would no doubt launch an aggressive campaign to attract these men to settle overseas. '[S]urely it would be deplorable if such men had no opportunity of settlement in their native country'. British public opinion would condemn the government if no concessions were made for settlement at home.<sup>97</sup> Selborne proposed following the Verney committee's recommendations of establishing a cooperative colony system comprised of small allotments between three to five acres. He urged that because ownership or tenancy of small holdings was politically such a divisive issue the land would remain under the complete control of the state. The Marquis of Crewe in his weekly cabinet summary to King George V reported that the veterans' resettlement colonies were 'in reality part of the great problem of reorganisation and of restoration after the war, bound up with all the social and commercial activities of the country'.<sup>98</sup>

Selborne was authorised to submit estimates to the Treasury for the establishment of three experimental colonies. These colonies were to be placed in different parts of the country in order to test the settlers' ability to adapt to a variety of soil, farming and climatic conditions. The Treasury would provide a 'modest outlay' of capital and Lord Lansdowne, a prominent landlord and chairman of the cabinet committee appointed to study Selborne's proposals, emphasised the importance of 'maintaining the purely experimental character of the schemes, and of not holding out hopes of a general allotment of land' to disabled and discharged ex-servicemen.<sup>99</sup>

Selborne succeeded in establishing his pioneering colonies which were provided for in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1916.<sup>100</sup> Practical agriculturists attacked the act as a trifling piece of legislation and a 'miserable little bill'.<sup>101</sup> R. E. Prothero MP, a leading agricultural reformer and a future president of the Board of Agriculture, believed that the initial capacity of 300 men was 'wholly

inadequate'. His lack of confidence was justified in the face of press reports which estimated that 750,000 men would return to the land after the war.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, these same critics agreed that if the legislation marked the beginning of a new development in British agricultural policy it was a scheme worth fostering.<sup>103</sup>

Prothero, later Lord Ernle, realised that domestic colonisation would only relieve some of the pressure for soldiers wanting to farm. '[M]en who wish to settle on the land and to follow agriculture as an industry ought not to be driven, for lack of opportunity, out of this country. [However] if men are such adventurous spirits...they should have every facility given them within the Empire, and in that way the Mother Country and her children will build up between them a stronger Empire'.<sup>104</sup> In October 1917 he presented a detailed memorandum to the War Cabinet on the entire question of providing land for soldiers upon demobilisation. Demand for land would far outstrip supply and it was evident that if these demands were not met immediately, or that no suitable settlement schemes had been installed before hostilities ended, it would arouse dangerous rumblings of discontent amongst returning veterans desirous of farming in Britain. It was essential to decide upon a policy immediately or else government inaction would contribute to the exodus of ex-servicemen eager to seek land overseas.<sup>105</sup>

The major obstacles to any large-scale government assisted, domestic land settlement scheme were the cost and availability of suitable agricultural land. Any large-scale resettlement scheme would require the purchase of land at prices inflated by the war. County councils, who were encouraged to participate in small holdings schemes, could not outbid the larger, wealthier farmers because of the Treasury's freeze on local spending. Speculation compounded the problem and was seriously endangering attempts by local authorities to settle returning veterans. A large injection of money was needed if the domestic resettlement work was to succeed. Ernle fully understood the problems the county councils were facing. The war had placed enormous constraints on the money supply and until the Treasury lifted the embargo on borrowing the county councils would continue to face an almost impossible task.<sup>106</sup>

The cost of land was one inhibiting factor but the greater obstacle which had to be overcome was the fact that there was not much Crown land the government could spare for soldier settlement. Of the 200,000 acres Ernle thought could be brought into profitable production

the state would have to make available the badly needed money for extensive and expensive reclamation work.<sup>107</sup> One option Ernle tinkered with was compulsory acquisition and a system of land nationalisation. Staunch conservatives, like the Colonial Secretary and Tory die-hard Walter Long, balked at the idea. 'Any system of land nationalisation would throw the country into the hands of the trade unions', proclaimed the reactionary Long, who, as Minister of Health and President of the Local Government Board in 1916, had advised extreme caution when the cabinet had examined Selborne's land settlement proposals.<sup>108</sup> He seriously questioned the role of the state in the proposed enterprise and the scale of public assistance. Did these proposals not go against the spirit of private land ownership, a most preeminent institution, and all the social conventions it implied?

Throughout 1918 Ernle and Dr. Christopher Addison, Minister of Reconstruction, attempted to persuade the cabinet to remove the administrative encumbrances and the Treasury embargo on county council spending which was not only preventing the expansion of the small holding scheme, but which was seriously hampering the efforts of local authorities to satisfy increasing demand from men already discharged.<sup>109</sup> In May, Ernle demanded that in view of the urgency of the situation the government had to make a policy declaration to satisfy public demand. It was imperative, warned Ernle and Addison in a joint memorandum to the War Cabinet, that the nation's obligation to its ex-servicemen be met without delay so as not to imperil the good faith of the government.<sup>110</sup> On 15 May 1918 the War Cabinet considered the proposals and agreed to refer them to a ministerial committee headed by the Home Secretary, Sir George Cave. The committee was to provide a blueprint for the rural regeneration of Britain based on land settlement, the development of rural industries, the promotion and extension of afforestation, reclamation of waste land and the provision of rural housing.

The Cave committee, which included Ernle and Addison, released its interim report at the end of October. Confining its attention to the needs of ex-servicemen it recommended the provision of small holdings of between one and fifty acres not exceeding an annual rent of £50. Each small holding would average ten acres in size with the provision for cottage sites and gardens. It estimated that one million acres would be required for the entire project and might be obtained through a system of voluntary acquisition from large estates held by the Crown,

Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, hospitals, charities, private individuals and parish glebe lands.<sup>111</sup>

The committee recognised compulsory state purchase on such a scale was a novel idea but rejected it outright in favour of the more traditional means of land acquisition. Similarly, it proposed that county councils, rather than the central government, carry out the administrative details including land acquisition because of their previous experience with small holdings. Furthermore, the committee recommended the establishment of credit facilities for those candidates wanting to stock their farms and suggested the sum of £2.5 million be voted to enable the local authorities to equip the land provided under the scheme. The Board of Agriculture was asked to prepare detailed projects for the selection, reclamation and improvement of waste land which could be reserved for ex-servicemen's holdings.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, Addison, who had been instructed to examine rural housing, especially the need for cottages with land attached, presented his proposals to the government in mid-October. The demobilisation committee of the War Cabinet decided to refer the memorandum to the Home Affairs Committee.<sup>113</sup> It was not until 21 November that Cave's interim report was taken up by the War Cabinet. However, during the interval the Armistice was announced, dramatically altering the course of events and catching the government without a home or overseas soldier settlement policy. Led by Ernle, the War Cabinet rejected the Cave committee's proposals as inadequate to deal with the critical situation which had arisen. Ernle believed that the recommendations did not allow for the swift acquisition of sufficient quantities of land to meet the requirements of an earlier demobilisation. He requested that the government should provide an emergency loan of between £20 and £30 million to the county councils in the first year for the acquisition of land and equipment. The Cave committee was invited by the War Cabinet to consider Ernle's new proposals.<sup>114</sup> Four days later it presented its final report endorsing in full Ernle's recommendations. The central government was asked to provide the county councils with £20 million for land purchasing and pay 75% of any deficit incurred between income and expenditure in respect to the working of the scheme. Provisions for training ex-servicemen to settle or obtain employment on the land were also outlined.<sup>115</sup>

On 2 December Ernle submitted his proposal for the emergency grant. Addison was shocked and felt betrayed that Ernle, whom he had

worked so closely with over the last year in drafting the new small holdings policy, had apparently succumbed to the magic of Lloyd George. That the Prime Minister was attracted to this 'dramatic gesture' came as no surprise to the Minister of Reconstruction. Addison was displeased with the sudden change in policy because it destroyed the careful planning and the emphasis on proper training and selection. Moreover, it contradicted his efforts to avoid excessive capital expenditure and would probably signal the start of an avalanche of applicants that would soon exhaust the money allocated. And then what was to be done?<sup>116</sup> Despite his disappointment there was little he could do and on 18 December the Home Affairs Committee endorsed the grant in the face of Treasury opposition.

Meanwhile, on 5 December an itemised statement was released to the press listing policy priorities which had been 'couponed' or targeted as important reconstruction objectives for Lloyd George's coalition ticket. The provision for ex-servicemen ranked in the top three.<sup>117</sup> As an electoral tactic, Lloyd George's appeal to the British public as a friend of the returned soldier was a shrewd piece of politicking. Nevertheless, the government was unprepared, despite continual warnings from the reconstructionists led by Ernle and Addison, to deal effectively with the demands of its ex-servicemen. There was another problem closely associated with the government's unpreparedness.

Although Ernle had led the attack on the Cave committee's recommendations he had done so because he thought that they were inadequate to meet the immediate post-war situation. Therefore his request for an emergency grant must be seen as an attempt to gain some breathing space in order to implement the long-term strategy he and Addison had outlined during the summer of 1918. But the emergency grant raised political problems of its own. Ernle became deeply concerned that a number of candidates attempted to make political capital out of an issue which they knew little or nothing about. Worse still, he feared that strong pressure from an ill-informed public would force Lloyd George to endorse a misconceived policy on grounds of political expediency. He confided to Walter Long that he thought he had persuaded the Prime Minister that it was dangerous to make indiscriminate promises about land settlement which he knew could not be honoured. Up until the beginning of December Ernle thought he had succeeded.<sup>118</sup> He was badly mistaken.

Lloyd George stressed to his cabinet colleagues that an

unrestricted land reform programme was more than a policy aimed at the rejuvenation of British agriculture. It possessed important social implications not least of which was halting the advance of Bolshevism. It was this argument which enabled the Prime Minister to overcome the reservations of some of his more stubborn Conservative cabinet members who were worried about cost. 'Just how the increased rural population, employed on the land with a living wage and with the amenities of proper accommodation and recreation facilities could be combined with adequate profits for existing farmers and with food prices acceptable to the urban buyer, he did not explain'. But this was precisely the problem Ernle and Addison most feared: agricultural efficiency was being sacrificed for a social ideal.<sup>119</sup>

In January 1919, during the height of the demobilisation crisis, Ernle presented an urgent and detailed memorandum to the cabinet outlining proposed legislation for a land settlement bill. He repeated his earlier warnings that the government had to be prepared to bear a considerable part of the initial cost of the new policy. He also castigated the cabinet for not allowing the county councils the opportunity of taking positive action during the war to acquire land for the inevitable post-war onslaught by returning veterans. His protestations fell on deaf ears. Meanwhile, speculation and inflation had sent land prices soaring and since the Board of Agriculture had no direct powers to buy land for cash it was in a very weak position to negotiate on favourable terms with large landowners. Fears were expressed that excessive prices would lead to exorbitant and prohibitive rents which in turn would discourage ex-servicemen and others from participating in the scheme.<sup>120</sup> The government's failure to make the urgent decisions and prepare a policy before the conclusion of the war had caused frustration and resentment in some quarters long before the Armistice. Annoyed, Ernle had grown impatient with government lethargy, ineptitude and its lack of urgency in the matter despite his valiant attempts to correct the situation. He was 'filling the role of a scapegoat' and he was not enjoying the ignominious position.<sup>121</sup> Although persuaded to give the Board of Agriculture's blessing to the government's plan for land reform in March 1919,<sup>122</sup> Ernle remained unconvinced of the political motives behind the policy. Disenchanted and worn out, he finally resigned in August 1919.

The new land settlement programme was launched by Ernle's successor Lord Lee of Fareham, the first Minister of Agriculture. Lord

Lee was a fervent social reformer who had the backing of Milner and the social imperialist wing of the Unionist Party. Wholeheartedly committed to the government's land settlement policy, he was determined to honour the 1918 election pledges. The injection of £20 million over the next two years for the facilitation of land settlement primarily for ex-servicemen was adopted 'in order to discharge a duty which the Government and the nation conceived that they owed to the men who had fought to save the country'.<sup>123</sup> At Caxton Hall in October 1919 Lloyd George reaffirmed the government's commitment to a group of agriculturists. It was clear that for both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture the land policy was not an economic policy in the narrow business sense, although they both believed it would contribute to the general health of the nation. Rather, it was a political commitment to a social policy which emphasised economic efficiency, social harmony, and the corporate values of rural life.<sup>124</sup>

At first, the scheme seemed a resounding success as the response by ex-servicemen was overwhelming. By May 1920, only nine months after the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act had been passed, three quarters of the allocation had been expended. Four months later it was entirely exhausted. Would additional money be forthcoming to meet the 1,500 new applicants the government was receiving each month? The answer was no. Equally embarrassing for the Ministry of Agriculture was that it was forced to admit that the £20 million had been insufficient to meet the demand by ex-service applicants.<sup>125</sup> Because of the enormous expenditure necessary to meet future demand, Lee recommended to the cabinet that further funds not be allocated to the project. He realised that both the county councils and the veterans associations would condemn the instructions as a breach of the government's promise to provide small holdings for its ex-servicemen. It was regrettable, lamented Lee, but circumstances dictated no other course: 'it is a mistaken kindness to allow men to apply if there is no prospect of satisfying their demand'.<sup>126</sup>

Why the sudden about-turn? Why were more funds not forthcoming? Had Ernle's reservations about short-term political gains versus long-term practical policies come home to roost? It was painfully obvious that inflationary land prices were one of the critical reasons for the failure to continue with the domestic land settlement policy. A total of 253,000 acres had been acquired by September 1920 in England and Wales which was enough to settle 17,770 men. However, only 8,178 had

been settled on allotments complete with houses and equipment. Approximately 24,000 candidates, including a small number of civilians, had been provisionally approved as suitable candidates but as of 1 December 1920, 14,858 were still without holdings.<sup>127</sup> Between the autumn of 1920 and the end of 1921 the situation for the veteran small holder steadily worsened. The Ministry of Agriculture enthusiastically reported in June 1923 that just under 19,000 men had settled of which 11,000 had taken possession since the 1920 harvest. But it was under no illusion as to the future difficulties these men would face. Moreover, only 8,000 had derived any benefit from the high produce prices obtained in 1919 and 1920.<sup>128</sup>

The future looked bleak indeed. If 1923 proved as unremunerative as the previous two years the number of failures was bound to increase dramatically. The Ministry of Agriculture tried to keep a brave face and stated that since 1920 a failure rate of 6.5% could scarcely be regarded as unsatisfactory. At the same time, they estimated that the small holder had already suffered a 40% depreciation in land value which aggravated an already weak position.<sup>129</sup> The prospect of increased losses, despite the subsequent fall in the price of land, brought the land purchasing policy to a grinding halt. A new policy was formulated whereby the county councils would take over full financial responsibility of their estates with the assistance of an annual grant from the central government. Estates would undergo a valuation which would determine the amount of the fixed grant paid to the local authority. Ex-servicemen would not be given preferential treatment as they had in the past. As vacancies arose they would be filled by the county councils from the pool of applicants which were on hand, civilian or otherwise.<sup>130</sup>

The charge of political expediency must be examined in the larger context of the events and atmosphere surrounding the 1918 election and its aftermath. The British government in the latter part of 1918 and the first six months of 1919 was confronted with widespread discontent in the armed forces. In part, military discontent was fuelled by the chaotic demobilisation procedure. Confronted with growing unrest and impatience within the armed forces over the slowness of the demobilisation procedure, senior army officers in both France and Britain were faced with increasingly violent outbreaks of indiscipline. Similarly, it was reported that the Navy was in danger of open mutiny.<sup>131</sup> Initially preoccupied with the general election most



politicians ignored these problems. However, as the disturbances escalated and intensified a growing number of politicians and ministers grew sensitive to veterans' issues, in particular domestic, and then overseas, soldier settlement. It was these domestic constraints which revitalised the apparently moribund plans to assist ex-servicemen to emigrate.

According to some government ministers, indiscipline and mutiny were symptoms of a larger, more menacing and socially destructive disease --- Bolshevism. 'There is undoubtedly, in this country', reported Sir Alfred Mond, the First Commissioner of Works in November 1918, 'a certain fever of revolutionary Bolshevik ideas'.<sup>132</sup> The Russian revolution had stimulated the growth of radical and revolutionary movements in Britain. Trade unionism, influenced by and supportive of the Russian revolution, had grown during the war as well. So too had the British government's domestic intelligence surveillance unit which monitored a variety of 'red', 'socialist' and 'anti-government' individuals and associations, including a number of ex-servicemen's organisations.<sup>133</sup> For the most part, veterans' leaders were levelheaded and pragmatic individuals who sought legitimate redress of grievances using constitutional methods through established institutions and forms of protest. However, according to the Special Branch, the National Union of Ex-Service Men (NUX) and the International Union of Ex-Service Men (IUX) were the exception. It reported that James Cox, the national secretary of the IUX, rejected constitutional action and the IUX was 'an out and out revolutionary socialist organisation seeking to establish an industrial republic'. The authorities, however, had little to fear from these 'socialist' ex-servicemen's organisations. It was unemployment, lack of proper housing and grievances over pension gratuities which fuelled the fires of most veteran discontent.<sup>134</sup> After a new and more acceptable demobilisation scheme was introduced in late January 1919 and soldiers were absorbed into the labour market, the unrest soon subsided. In hindsight, this challenge to authority may not have been critical, 'but it was unnerving'.<sup>135</sup>

#### SECTION 2.4: AN ADMINISTRATIVE LANDMARK IN CONSTRUCTIVE IMPERIALISM

The period between 1919 and 1922 proved to be a crucial one for constructive imperialists throughout the empire. Their hopes were initially raised by the appointment in January of Lord Milner, the embodiment of the social imperial creed, as Colonial Secretary, and his disciple and close confidant, Leo Amery, as Under-Secretary. Stressing the need for 'a complete change' in the Colonial Office, determined to impose their will over the permanent officials and assert their authority, the new leadership eagerly launched itself into its responsibilities convinced 'that we must in time give it a new "orientation"'.<sup>136</sup> The distinguishing feature of the Milner-Amery partnership was that they possessed a clear set of imperial objectives.<sup>137</sup> Leading the list of priorities was an aggressive empire migration policy.

The task of assisting ex-servicemen was a completely separate matter, according to Amery when he first took office in January: 'I had already at the [Oversea Settlement] committee hammered at any rate one point, namely that the treatment of ex-Service men is one of an award they are entitled to and has nothing to do with general emigration policy'.<sup>138</sup> Amery envisaged the free passage scheme as a limited venture restricted to a maximum of three years. However, there was an important qualification. 'In order...to avoid a mere stimulation of emigration in an undesirable form, this privilege should be strictly confined to bona fide settlers on the land, or those who can prove that they have a definite offer of other suitable employment'. As far as Amery was concerned the 'problem of the emigration of ex-service men is very largely an agricultural one'.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, permanent officials at the Colonial Office were unenthusiastic and seemed to regard the free passage scheme as the responsibility of another department such as the Ministry of Labour or the War Office.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, they acknowledged that some ex-servicemen would leave Britain no matter what the government's attitude or policy, but so far as they were concerned the free passage scheme was not an emigration scheme proper and therefore outside its jurisdiction or interest. Nor did they regard it as having any economic significance. It was simply a humanitarian gesture designed to lessen the financial burden of those wanting to make a new

life for themselves and their families in the overseas empire.<sup>141</sup>

Amery's more immediate aim was to frame a new emigration bill which would enhance imperial unity, contribute to the economic well being of the empire and offset the fiasco of Long's ill-conceived 1918 Emigration Bill. Despite his optimism, he encountered only delay, disappointment and frustration from a confused and divided cabinet between January and March 1919. He complained to Milner, who was in Paris at the peace talks, that he badly needed his support in the cabinet. Until Milner returned, the emigration bill would be 'left in the air'.<sup>142</sup>

The majority of the cabinet, led by a group of businessmen, were convinced that the nation would shortly experience an intense period of prosperity and a tremendous shortage of labour.<sup>143</sup> To promote emigration would therefore exacerbate the shortage, delay prosperity and hamper reconstruction. The Ministry of Labour strongly concurred.<sup>144</sup> Milner and Amery were however equally convinced that if a new emigration bill was not forthcoming immediately the country would face serious economic and social distress, and Sir Auckland Geddes, Minister of National Service, agreed.<sup>145</sup> The cabinet ignored the argument. Amery struggled constantly to get his emigration bill discussed in cabinet. On 7 February he saw Bonar Law, Lord Privy Seal, and ascertained that empire migration was to be included in the King's Speech. Four days later Amery went down to Parliament to hear the speech. To his disappointment, Lloyd George had omitted the subject at the last moment. At a stormy cabinet meeting two weeks later the Prime Minister continued to vacillate, being sceptical about the entire issue. Meanwhile, Amery was being asked questions on emigration in Parliament of which he had to give 'evasive answers'. Growing impatient, he pressed Bonar Law in early March to put empire migration again on the cabinet agenda and sent an additional note to the Prime Minister to prod him into action. Milner, who had returned from the peace talks, saw Amery several days later and reported that Lloyd George was 'still very sticky about the Overseas Settlement business'. After this further display of the Prime Minister's irresolution they chose to concentrate on getting the finances for the more immediate task of assisting the emigration of ex-servicemen. The broader overseas settlement legislation would have to wait.<sup>146</sup>

At the end of March, the war cabinet suddenly decided to take up the question of assisting ex-servicemen to emigrate overseas, catching

Amery off balance. Although he had prepared the necessary drafts complete with arguments, he had not supplied Milner with them. Nonetheless, the cabinet was eager to push ahead and on 31 March it accepted, subject to Lloyd George's approval, the recommendations on free passages outlined by Amery in February.<sup>147</sup> Why the sudden rush to implement a policy which most of the cabinet were content to ignore? Unemployment had become the government's main problem: in March 1919 over 300,000 veterans were receiving unemployment benefits.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, the cabinet feared the revolutionary spirit which was sweeping the country, and in particular ex-servicemen. Assisted emigration could ~~de~~-fuse the situation.

Amery wanted the government's offer of free passage to be open for three years beginning 1 January 1920. This allowed ex-servicemen ample time to choose between employment opportunities in Britain or the overseas empire. It was also designed to give the Dominions time to establish the necessary administrative machinery, prevent a rush of applications swamping the Overseas Settlement Office and 'to meet the possible charge that we wish to hustle people out of the country'.<sup>149</sup> It was estimated that a three year programme would assist no less than 405,000 ex-servicemen and their families at a cost of just over £6 million.<sup>150</sup> But three years was too long to promise argued the Treasury. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, thought it better to limit free passage to one year and reconsider its extension in light of the experience gained. On 8 April, Amery stood before Parliament during question time and announced the government's one year free passage grant for ex-servicemen and women which would begin on 1 January 1920. Pleased with the accomplishment, he realised that enormous difficulties yet lay ahead.<sup>151</sup> Its implementation would require the creation of an effective administrative structure and the willing cooperation of Dominion authorities.

What were the mechanics of the free passage scheme? Ex-servicemen and women who had enlisted for active duty and whose service began before 1 January 1920 were eligible under the scheme but not those who had served solely with Dominion, colonial or Indian army units. Women were required to have served for not less than six months in a corps administered by a British government department. This not only included the women's branches of the armed forces but a variety of nursing services, the Women's Land Army, the Forage Corps and the Forestry Corps. All concerned could obtain free third class passages for

themselves and their dependents to the nearest convenient port of the Dominion or colony of their choice. The same privilege was extended to the widows and dependents of fallen ex-servicemen provided they fulfilled the criteria above and were drawing a pension from the Imperial government.<sup>152</sup> The British government through the local officials of the fledgling Ministries of Labour and Pensions established the eligibility of applicants. The onus was placed squarely on the Dominions to evaluate each case individually and to judge whether the candidate was medically fit and properly suited for employment opportunities overseas. Only when the OSC had received Dominion approval would a third class passage warrant be issued.<sup>153</sup>

Sustained unemployment among British ex-servicemen provided the impetus for the extension of the ex-servicemen's free passage scheme. As unemployment intensified in the latter part of 1920 Milner and Amery were determined to get it extended for another year. In October Amery appeared before the newly formed cabinet committee on unemployment, chaired by Sir L. Worthington-Evans, to argue for the scheme's extension as 'a means of relieving abnormal unemployment during the coming winter'. Milner reiterated the point to the cabinet two weeks later. Money spent on assisted passages, he argued, also saved the Exchequer from the sustained burden of crippling unemployment benefits.<sup>154</sup> The Treasury nevertheless remained hostile to any suggestion of increased expenditure, particularly for the extension of the ex-servicemen's free passage scheme.

As winter tightened its grip and unemployment rose, however, even a reluctant Treasury had to admit the need for limited action. In November the cabinet agreed with Milner's October memorandum and the Treasury sanctioned a one year extension of the free passage scheme. 'I am clear', wrote Chamberlain, 'that if the original policy was right this extension is still more right'.<sup>155</sup> The Minister of Labour, Dr. T. J. Macnamara, previously sceptical of Amery's overseas settlement strategy, became a convert as well. In 1922 he explained to his cabinet colleague, Winston Churchill, that his concern stemmed from the tens of thousands of young, able-bodied but unemployed ex-servicemen who had been out of work for more than two years. 'I have been thinking that we ought to look to over-sea settlement as one of the methods of relieving the unemployment situation here. I know that we have hitherto hesitated to relate over-sea settlement and unemployment and it is only the present exceptional position and emergency that would warrant any other

course'.<sup>156</sup>

The financial provisions of the free passage scheme were not extended past December 1921 because of plans to introduce the broader Empire Settlement Act in early 1922.<sup>157</sup> However, successful applicants were given until 31 December 1922 to make their sailing. The deadline was further extended until March 1923 for those few who had delayed their departure because of illness or bureaucracy.

However, the final total of 86,027 fell far short of the 405,000 estimated by Amery in early 1919.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, it was evident that these numbers were not going to make an appreciable impact on relieving Britain of its unemployment 'emergency' or promote imperial cooperation, unity and self-sufficiency. To better understand the shortcomings of the ex-servicemen's free passage scheme and the incorporation of British veterans in a host of overseas soldier settlement projects, it is necessary to examine Dominion policies and attitudes in greater detail.

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The Cabinet desire that this policy shall not be spoken of as necessarily part of a larger policy, and stress is to be laid on the experimental and strictly limited character of the operation. No language is to be used which would lead every disabled or discharged sailor and soldier who wishes to settle on the land to think that he has a claim to have land provided for him. The establishment of these colonies is to be regarded as an experiment of a new type of settlement.

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If handled properly, Sir Alfred Mond saw the returned man as a source of stability and an ally of the government. 'I regard these men as the element best calculated to keep selfish extremists and irresponsible youths in their places. If generously treated [the soldiers] would make an element of order and stability'. PRO, CAB 24/69/GT 6270, memorandum by Mond, 12 November 1918. For an examination of British ex-servicemen's organisations as pressure groups see G. Wootton, The Politics of Influence; ibid., The Official History of the British Legion (London: Macdonald and Evans, Ltd., 1956).

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143. Barnes and Nicholson, I, p. 257.
144. PRO, LAB 2/1229/ED 20058/4, secret memorandum, 3 February 1919; CO 721/3/f. 52, Phillips to Macnaghten, 30 January 1919; Barnes and Nicholson, I, p. 253.
145. Barnes and Nicholson, I, p. 256.
146. HLRO, David Lloyd George Papers, F/39/1/9, Amery to Lloyd George, 1 March 1919; Barnes and Nicholson, I, pp. 256-8; Drummond, p. 60; Amery diaries, 4, 5 and 10 March 1919.
147. PRO, CAB 23/9, minutes of War Cabinet, 31 March 1919; Amery diaries, 31 March 1919.
148. S. Ward, ed., The War Generation (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 22.
149. PRO, CO 532/143/20660, Amery to Milner, 7 April 1919.
150. PRO, CO 721/1, 'Note on the Cost of the Proposals Contained in the Memorandum of the Emigration Committee', n.d. In Dane Kennedy's article, 'Empire Migration in Post-War Reconstruction: The Role of the Overseas Settlement Committee, 1919-1922', Albion, XX (1988), p. 415, the figure is misquoted as 450,000.
151. PRO, CO 532/143/20660, Chamberlain to Amery, 8 April 1919; Amery diaries, 8 April 1919; Hansard, fifth series, CXIX, 1919, cols. 1857-8.
152. PRO, T 161/86/S 6527/06, copy of an OSC information flyer on the ex-service free passage scheme. For the treatment of British ex-servicewomen see Brian L. Blakeley, 'The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement, 1917-1936', Albion, XX, 3 (Fall 1988), pp. 421-44. Under the 1919 legislation ex-servicewomen were not entitled to claim free passage for their husbands, if they themselves were not entitled already. During World War II it was recommended by an inter-departmental committee responsible for overseas settlement and demobilisation that this discrimination be rectified if it was decided to offer similar privileges after hostilities. PRO, CAB 117/152, Overseas Settlement and Demobilisation (1942-43).
153. G. F. Plant, Oversea Settlement (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 73.
154. PRO, CAB 27/115/CU 40, Amery to Worthington-Evans, 1 October 1920; Drummond, p. 62.



155. Drummond, pp. 62-4; PRO, T 161/73/S 5691/1, minute by G. C. Upcott, junior Treasury official, 4 October 1920; T 161/30/S 1710, minute by Chamberlain, 8 November 1920. The cabinet committee on unemployment heartily endorsed a one-year extension. PRO, CAB 24/115/CP 2145, 'State-Aided Emigration', 25 November 1920.

156. PRO, CAB 27/115/CU 14, memorandum on emigration by Macnamara, 11 September 1920; CAB 24/137/CP 4062, memorandum by Macnamara, 22 June 1922; CO 537/1036, Macnamara to Churchill, 19 June 1922.

157. The issue of whether overseas settlement provided an effective remedy for domestic unemployment was keenly debated in cabinet and in a variety of departmental minutes throughout the 1920s. In a series of cabinet memoranda submitted by Amery between 1920 and 1922, he attempted to persuade the government to expand upon the principles laid down in the ex-servicemen's free passage scheme and embark upon a more ambitious and comprehensive overseas settlement strategy. He recognised that the immediate relief overseas settlement could afford to unemployment at any particular moment was strictly limited by the Dominions' capacity to absorb new arrivals. He also stressed that overseas settlement was not a substitute for the various emergency measures which were being implemented to combat unemployment, rather it was a complementary measure. Alfred Mond, now Minister of Health and Worthington-Evans's successor as chairman of the cabinet unemployment committee, fully agreed with Amery's prognosis. He was more 'impressed each day with a view that unemployment is a factor with which we shall have to reckon for years rather than for months'; and therefore there was no permanent solution to unemployment without an aggressive and vigorous migration policy.

Similarly, the Board of Trade endorsed the general tenet of Amery's argument and agreed that emigration was an important and desirable ancillary to the existing emergency relief measures. Economic arguments aside, the Board of Trade's analysis emphasised a much more important but less publicised reason for pursuing the relief of unemployment through a state-aided migration policy. As one official boldly put it, 'the political considerations outweigh all others in this connection'. The Treasury remained unconvinced. However, its objections were overruled by the course of events as the unemployment crisis deepened in 1921 and 1922. This enabled Amery to overcome the last remnants of cabinet resistance to his overseas settlement strategy. In April 1922, and with little debate, the Empire Settlement Act was passed.

See the following: PRO, CAB 24/123/CP 2943, memorandum by Amery on proceedings and recommendations of the State-Aided Empire Settlement Conference, 24 February 1921 and submitted to cabinet by the Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, 6 May 1921; CAB 24/131/CP 3582 and CP 3582-A, memoranda by Amery, 12 December and 29 September 1921 respectively; PRO, Prime Minister's Office, PREM 1/22, Amery to Prime Minister Bonar Law, 1 December 1922; CAB 24/131/CP 3590 and CAB 24/133/CP 3778, memoranda by Mond, 4 January and 24 February 1922; BT 65/11/PTE 2981, departmental minutes, 10 November 1921 and 9-11 January 1922; PRO, Otto Neimeyer Papers, T 176/11, memorandum by the economist R. G. Hawtrey, 6 January 1922. On the issue of unemployment and public policy see K. J. Hancock, 'The Reduction of Unemployment as a Problem of Public Policy, 1920-29', Economic History Review, 2nd series, XV (1962-63), pp. 328-43; Stephen Constantine, Unemployment in Britain Between the Wars (London: Longman Group Limited, 1980); W. H. Dawson, 'Empire Settlement and Unemployment', Contemporary Review, CXXVII (May 1925), pp. 576-83. For the background to Britain's economic problems in the 1920s see R. H. Tawney, 'The Abolition of Economic Controls, 1918-1921', Economic History Review, XIII (1943), pp. 1-30; Peter Cline, 'Winding Down the War Economy: British Plans for Peacetime

Recovery, 1916-19', in Kathleen Burk, ed., War and the State (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 157-81; Derek H. Aldcroft, From Versailles to Wall Street 1919-1929 (London: Allen Lane Publishers, 1977). For a reappraisal of British monetary policy and its impact on British foreign policy and international relations during the 1920s see Robert Boyce, British Capitalism at the Crossroads 1919-1932 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). On the Empire Settlement Act see S. Wertimer, 'Migration from the United Kingdom to the Dominions in the Interwar Period, with special reference to the Empire Settlement Act of 1922', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1952; Keith Williams, 'The British State, Social Imperialism and Emigration From Britain, 1900-22: The Ideology and Antecedents of the Empire Settlement Act', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1985; Drummond, pp. 43-144.

158. Plant, pp. 74-75.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### **CANADA, BRITISH IMMIGRATION AND SOLDIER SETTLEMENT 1867-1917**

A major source of Canadian immigration throughout the nineteenth century was the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> It remained an important source between 1900 and 1914 but was overshadowed by the waves of American and Central European immigrants which flooded western Canada during the boom years of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government (1896-1911). The flow of immigration from the United Kingdom was temporarily disrupted by the cataclysm of World War I, but its promotion was renewed with determined enthusiasm after the cessation of hostilities in 1918. Generally speaking, there were three distinct periods or phases of British emigration to Canada: the immediate post-confederation years (1867-1896); the boom and bust years of the early twentieth century (1897-1914); and the inter-war years (1919-1939). Each period is significant for different reasons and gives an important insight into Canadian immigration and development policy. Although the focus of this thesis is the first decade of the inter-war period it is essential to examine briefly Canadian attitudes and policies toward British immigrants between 1867 and 1914.

#### **SECTION 3: MEAGRE BEGINNINGS 1867-1896**

The promotion of immigration was a vital ingredient of Canada's economic development. After 1867, successive federal governments aimed to attract immigrants who would settle on vacant lands in the western prairies. They hoped that with the completion of the trans-continental railway in 1885 this would facilitate a steady flow of agricultural settlers keen on developing the vast tracts of rich, virgin soil. Similarly, continuous economic growth based on agricultural development and assisted by increased railway construction would create the necessary demands for manufactured goods produced in central Canada. The exchange of primary resources with manufactured goods and capital on an east-west axis, linked by a national railway system, provided the

basic economic strategy of what became called the National Policy. It was therefore essential to the continued growth of Canadian wealth and prosperity that these lonely wind-swept regions be settled as quickly as possible with the right type of settler. As a result, the federal Department of Agriculture was given exclusive jurisdiction over the formulation and implementation of immigration policy. Furthermore, after the Dominion-Provincial conference of 1874, colonisation on the prairies remained a federal responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

The maintenance of immigration by the federal government and its monopolistic control over land settlement and development in the prairie region were key factors to the success of the National Policy. Immigrants were regarded by Ottawa as an 'economic resource' to be especially exploited for the purpose of national development.<sup>3</sup> However, not every immigrant was wanted or welcomed. 'The condition of success in Canada is honest work', declared a federal Department of Agriculture settler guide, 'and none should come seeking to make a living who have not made up their minds to work. Canada is no place for the idle or the dissipated, and none of this class should think of coming'.<sup>4</sup>

The emphasis on the immigration of farmers and farm labourers dominated official thinking from 1867 to 1914. The Dominion Lands Act of 1872 established a lavish free grant policy on the prairies aimed at meeting the needs of the individual settler. Upon the payment of a \$10 entry fee and the completion of certain settlement duties, which included a limited amount of cultivation and residence, each adult of twenty-one years would receive 160 acres. Before the land patent was issued, normally at the end of three years, the homesteader had to be a British subject. These conditions had to be met before any homestead transfer was allowed.<sup>5</sup> The entire antiquated process of issuing patents for homesteads from Ottawa was streamlined by employing the local land agent and the Land Commissioner at Winnipeg. Later the age of eligibility was lowered to eighteen while guarantees were introduced to protect the homesteader from creditors during the early stages of settlement. In the case of financial insolvency, the homesteader was exempted from seizure of certain numbers and varieties of livestock, agricultural tools, out-buildings and the homestead.<sup>6</sup>

However, the period between 1867 and 1896 witnessed very little expansion in the numbers of agricultural immigrants entering Canada. The free grant system proved extremely wasteful with the ultimate

benefactor being the hungry land speculator. Conversely, the settlement duties, which appeared easy to fulfil on paper, proved very difficult to fulfil for those homesteaders without capital. Many were forced to supplement their farm income by additional seasonal employment off the farm. What became immediately apparent was that the vast majority of immigrants had no previous experience of pioneer life and lacked the necessary reserve of investment capital to succeed in agriculture. The federal government was painfully slow to react to the harsh reality that free land by no means guaranteed successful settlement and development.

There were other problems. Despite the fact that the primary task of Canada's immigration policy was to attract people to settle her vacant lands, many immigrants found it easier to find employment in the mining, timber, construction and railway industries. They were encouraged into occupations which demanded heavy manual labour, jobs a growing number of Canadians refused to accept.<sup>7</sup> The long hours of tedious, backbreaking farm labour, particularly when clearing the land of scrub and bush, deterred many immigrants from sticking it out. Those who persevered had earned their homestead many times over before actually owning the land.<sup>8</sup>

### SECTION 3.1: THE DAWNING OF A NEW AGE 1896-1914

The appointment of the young and dynamic Clifford Sifton, the former Attorney-General of Manitoba, as Minister of the Interior in Laurier's Liberal government of 1896 was significant for several reasons. He symbolised a new, aggressive and nationalistic Canada; a Canada that was eager to forge ahead and claim the twentieth century as its own. He firmly believed that the state's role in society was to participate actively in shaping it and to help society come to terms with the needs and demands of a modern industrial nation. Similarly, parochialism or regionalism was anathema to Sifton's idea of confederation. For example, the west was not a separate economic unit but rather a constituent part within the national framework which required disciplined and effective management. He never doubted the west's enormous resource potential and possessed boundless enthusiasm and faith in its continued economic growth and development.<sup>9</sup>

The Department of the Interior, previously 'a department of delay, a department of circumlocution', became a vigorous and vibrant ministry

under Sifton's leadership.<sup>10</sup> He was pragmatic, commonsensical and had been chosen for his business experience and administrative skills. He displayed greater flexibility and determination in policy formulation and implementation than any of his predecessors. At the same time, he firmly believed that successful implementation could only be achieved through administrative centralisation and legislation which gave the federal bureaucracy the authority it needed.<sup>11</sup>

Sifton was determined to overhaul and remodel Canadian immigration and settlement policy. However, he did not revolutionise it in the sense of embarking on novel approaches or adopting new techniques. Rather, his success was determined by his resolute re-examination of existing policies, his rationalisation of department business, his ability to surround himself with a cadre of capable people and his dynamic personality.<sup>12</sup> However, it would be grossly misleading to state that Sifton's achievements were attributable solely to his administrative prowess and leadership abilities. A larger budget allowed Canadian immigration authorities to conduct a concerted propaganda campaign which allowed them to compete successfully for immigrants in the United States and overseas. Equally important, there were a number of economic factors which made Canada a more viable destination for immigrants.

The resurgence of world wheat prices caused by increased demand from industrialised nations at the end of a prolonged world depression in the late 1890s, coupled by falling transshipment costs for wheat made possible by improvements in the speed and efficiency of rail and ocean transport, made the settlement and economic development of the Canadian prairies more attractive. Technological improvements in farm machinery and scientific advances in cereal hybridisation also played a vital role in increasing the economic viability of the Canadian west. Similarly, by the turn of the century, the scattered remnants of American prairie had been opened up and settled. Consequently, land prices rose significantly prompting many American farmers to migrate north to the vacant and cheaper lands of the 'last, best West'. Interrelated were a number of socio-economic factors which surfaced simultaneously in Europe. They included rural depopulation, severe bouts of unemployment, social unrest and racial discrimination.<sup>13</sup>

The major objective of Sifton's immigration policy was a speedy and systematic settlement of the west. A fervent believer that the only good immigrant was an agricultural immigrant, Sifton embarked on a

selective immigration policy which emphasised the need for experienced agricultural settlers whatever their nationality. The establishment of a resourceful and independent yeoman class, which was prepared and equipped to put up with the toil and sacrifice of a pioneer way of life the prairies demanded, was the foundation upon which Sifton built his immigration and development policies.

The Alberta demagogue, Frank Oliver, replaced Sifton as Minister of the Interior in Laurier's third administration in 1905. Oliver, one of his predecessor's strongest political rivals, never favoured Sifton's 'open door' policy and was perhaps its most vocal critic. Immediately upon becoming minister he drafted a new, more restrictive Immigration Act which expanded the minister's powers to reject and deport 'undesirables'. A progression of amendments followed the 1906 Act which effectively prohibited the entry of criminals, social misfits and the medically unfit. Blacks, Asians and Orientals were virtually denied entry into Canada. The emphasis remained on agricultural immigrants but promotional efforts were shifted from central and eastern Europe to increased recruitment in Great Britain. Oliver was an intense Anglophile and his appointment coincided with growing nativist fears that Canada's 'new citizens' would destroy her Anglo-Saxon character. 'It is necessary', he declared, 'that settlement should be as much as possible of people not only much like ourselves but altogether like ourselves...in other words that we should draw upon the British islands as much as possible...and that every effort should be made to attract immigration from the British Isles'.<sup>14</sup> In order to protect Canada's 'national fabric' Oliver did not hesitate to curtail the flow of continental European immigration while at the same time being less selective about the type of British immigrant he allowed into Canada. By 1911 Oliver could boast that his policy was 'restrictive, exclusive and selective' in comparison with Sifton's.<sup>15</sup> But at a price.

Between 1902 and 1914 there occurred the largest trans-Atlantic migration of British emigrants to Canada. One of its more undesirable consequences was that thousands of British paupers flooded Canadian shores assisted by a host of charitable organisations. The vast majority were from urban and industrial backgrounds. Suspicion grew among Canadians that Britain was using Canada as a dumping ground for its unemployed and socially undesirable; that it was a deliberate attempt mounted by a few British municipalities to reduce the financial burden the unemployed exacted on the poor rates.<sup>16</sup> These attitudes

intensified as the world's economy experienced a short, sharp recession in 1907-08. As a result, the work of these charitable organisations became the objective of much popular criticism.

The Canadian government, with the minor exception of a handful of British ex-soldiers, had consistently refused to employ a system of assisted passages because it was contrary to the basic tenet of Canadian immigration policy. It argued that immigrants who required assistance lacked self-reliance, initiative and resourcefulness and therefore increased the chances of them becoming destitute and charges of the state. The Canadian public agreed wholeheartedly, yet British immigrants continued to arrive in Canada subsidised by various charitable associations. How could the Canadian government reconcile the apparent incongruity?<sup>17</sup>

The battle to restrict the flow of urban, British immigrants sponsored by charitable societies was a long and complicated affair which tarnished Canada's image as a favoured immigration destination. In the midst of the recession of 1907-08, the Immigration Branch of the Department of the Interior issued the first of a series of regulations designed to stem the flow of unwanted urban immigrants. Notice was given that the only classes of immigrant wanted during the present economic downturn were female domestics, experienced farm labourers and farmers with capital. Not everyone applauded the new restrictions. The Canadian Governor-General, Earl Grey, informed Lord Elgin, Secretary of State for the Colonies, that he thought the Canadian government was making a mistake by inhibiting British immigration.<sup>18</sup> In 1909, F. G. A. Butler, chairman of the EIO, visited Canada and reported a resolute enmity towards assisted immigrants from Britain and indeed towards British immigrants in general. The Canadian state of mind 'seemed to be a blend of disappointment and resentment that the English immigrant [was] not more to their liking'.<sup>19</sup> The apparent 'unpopularity' and 'unadaptability' of the British immigrant was striking when contrasted to the more favourable opinions many Canadians harboured towards immigrants from northern Europe and the United States. Butler tried to explain away Canadian antipathy by admitting that Canada had been overburdened by a poorer class of city-bred British immigrant between 1905-08. But he countered with the conviction that the ordinary British immigrant was still to be highly prized and remained invaluable to Canadian development. He informed his Colonial Office superiors that Canada had 'all the self-confidence of a young and successful nation and



all the impatience of a busy man eager to prosper quickly. [She] is disturbed by any impediment, and is not disposed to make allowances for and to try to remedy what does not come up to [her] expectations'. He regretted that British immigrants would start their new lives in Canada under 'an appreciable handicap in the estimation of [their] new countrymen' but he hoped that in the future Canadians would develop a more sympathetic view to their imperial brethren.<sup>20</sup>

This wish was still being echoed in 1913 after a visit to Canada by W. B. Paton, another EIO official. There was no doubt in Paton's mind that there was some degree of disharmony between the British immigrant and native-born Canadians. 'The Canadian has a short sharp way of speaking which the Englishman resents, each thinks that he knows everything, and that his own methods are the best, each in his own way looks upon the other as inferior...'<sup>21</sup> Paton warned that new arrivals would have to conform to local customs and habits quickly. It was essential for the British immigrant to 'avoid undue self-assertion at the outset' for fear of bringing derision and suspicion upon himself from the locals. Friction no doubt existed. For example, an English barrister who had lived in Canada for thirty years stated that Canadians regarded Englishmen as 'fools to be milked'. A policeman in western Canada told Paton that his lack of advancement in the force could be attributed to the fact that he was English. A Canadian immigration agent whom Paton interviewed denounced British immigrants as drunkards and condemned them for their inefficiency. However, Paton concluded that the 'necessities of life in a new country must override personal jealousies' and each must learn to live together.<sup>22</sup>

A small but increasing number of Canadians tended to question the sincerity and ability of most British immigrants, urban or rural, to adapt themselves to Canadian life. More alarming was the marked decline in the number of British agricultural immigrants who pursued farming as a full-time occupation. As one Canadian historian points out:

The strong objections raised to immigrants from [Britain] clearly demonstrates that the ability to speak English or even membership in the Anglo-Saxon race were not sufficient qualifications for acceptance. 'English-speaking' and 'Anglo-Saxon' were terms used to indicate other qualities - qualities of self-reliance, initiative, thrift, intelligence - and when these qualities seemed to be lacking, the immigrants were not considered as truly belonging to the preferred category.<sup>23</sup>

Infrequently, large employers such as Lord Shaughnessy, President of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), reflected these growing doubts. He believed that Canadian immigration policy would be increasingly jeopardised if the government continued to recruit unskilled labour in Great Britain. It had been his experience to have nothing to do with British workers who expected nothing less than 'high wages, a feather bed and a bath tub' while working in the primitive and isolated environment of a bush camp.<sup>24</sup> Complaints from beleaguered municipal officials inundated Ottawa demanding the deportation of British immigrants who had refused farm work and were proving a drain on local relief funds.<sup>25</sup>

Canada's preference for agriculturalists remained the primary, motivating factor behind its immigration policy. But many people failed to grasp the reality that British immigration after 1902 was predominantly urban, unskilled and non-agricultural. Britain's agricultural population was relatively small compared to its industrial population and with the acceleration of rural depopulation in Britain after the Boer War it became increasingly more difficult for Canada to obtain experienced British agriculturalists.<sup>26</sup> Besides, conditions in Britain did not favour the emigration of farmers and farm labourers because wages and working conditions were better at home than in Canada. Thanks in part to a resurgence in domestic agriculture those left on the land found their services at a premium. According to one Canadian immigration commissioner, in some rural areas of the United Kingdom there was a scarcity of experienced farm labour.<sup>27</sup> Hence, the federal government's constant pursuit of experienced farmers in central Europe and the United States.

Officially, agriculturalists remained the top priority of Canada's increasingly selective immigration policy. But the pressure exerted, particularly by the railway companies, for the recruitment of the 'industrial' foreign navy definitely frightened observers such as Sifton.<sup>28</sup> For others, the ever-increasing influx of the industrial immigrant signalled the deterioration of a national economic strategy originally designed to promote the agricultural development of the country. The exodus of immigrants from farming, in particular those of British stock, caused other problems. Agriculture was still a very labour intensive endeavour and established farmers sorely complained about the lack of help, especially during seeding and harvesting.<sup>29</sup> Compounding the problem was the tendency of British immigrants to

possess urban and industrial backgrounds. Naturally, the vast majority of them congregated in Canada's expanding towns and cities, and in many cases were the only immigrants who possessed the necessary industrial skills essential to a diversifying Canadian economy. Those who migrated west, more often than not, contributed to the growing urbanisation of the prairies which seemed to go unnoticed by Canadian politicians intent on promoting settlement and rural development.<sup>30</sup>

### SECTION 3.2: POLICY REVIEW AND DEBATE 1914-1918

The outbreak of war effectively ended imperial migration for five years. 'Of course everything here is all war and excitement, and consequently the matter of emigration has fallen very far into the background', reported W. W. Cory, the Deputy Minister of the Interior in August 1914. W. D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration in Ottawa agreed. Policy discussions had been 'totally eclipsed by the war'. Conditions were so 'abnormal', he explained, that 'I scarcely know what to recommend'. The Colonial Office used stronger imagery. Emigration was 'at present virtually dead and shows no signs of early revival'.<sup>31</sup> Senior Canadian immigration officials on both sides of the Atlantic thought it useless and 'somewhat unpatriotic' to continue advertising for immigrants in British newspapers which could be misinterpreted as enticing potential British soldiers and munitions workers to the Canadian prairies. The suspension of emigration propaganda in Britain by all the Dominions shortly after the commencement of hostilities was more than just a patriotic gesture designed to display imperial solidarity. It was an economic necessity. Subsequently, the Canadian government adhered to the policy of disallowing the entry of British immigrants eligible for war work or military service. It was decided by Ottawa that it was even in the best interests of those British immigrants who were too old to fight but not too old to farm not to be encouraged to emigrate.<sup>32</sup>

Although immigration was not considered a wartime problem its close association with post-war reconstruction made it an important issue.<sup>33</sup> And, as the RCI conducted its post-war emigration campaign against a stubborn and intransigent Colonial Office in 1915, some Canadian immigration officials and enthusiasts used the time to examine steps the Canadian government could take to meet an anticipated flood of

British immigrants after the war. J. Obed Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Emigration in London, submitted several lengthy reports to his superiors at the Immigration and Colonisation Branch of the Department of the Interior in March and June of 1915. The focus of these recommendations was the need to formulate an aggressive propaganda campaign aimed primarily at the British agricultural sector. Smith stressed the importance of being prepared: 'we ought to be supplied with lists of the opportunities for employment in definite cases, definite numbers and with definite wages'.<sup>34</sup>

Smith warned that there was a distinct shortage of agricultural labourers in Britain which made it imperative to cast a wider net to secure anyone with a 'farming instinct'.<sup>35</sup> This included rural folk who had been driven to the towns and cities looking for employment. It also included soldiers.

It is undeniable that a percentage...of the men who have taken up arms in this great War will find their ambitions and lines of work in life rudely interrupted, so that many of them will never agree to take an indoor occupation again, but their training in the field would fit them for manual work on the land...<sup>36</sup>

He suggested that his office be allowed to conduct a lecture series in the various barracks, training camps and depots to inform recruits of the opportunities which awaited them in Canada after the war. They were not emigration lectures as such but they would provide valuable information to the men who were turning their thoughts to new post-war occupations and careers. By March 1915, Smith reported he was already receiving inquiries from interested British servicemen and he stressed that Canada needed to strike while the iron was hot. It was essential, he argued, that Canadian emigration operations be extended and more skillfully managed in order to make a 'rapid impression' upon the large number of British troops when they returned from the front. Similarly, if emigration operations were extended advertising would cost more than ever before; but these were unusual times and required a broadening and recasting of post-war arrangements to cope with the new circumstances. 'We shall [therefore] not be under the disadvantage', he explained, 'of finding our competitors already in the same field, ploughing and sowing therein, while we have remained inactive and practically dormant'.<sup>37</sup>

If Canada was to be a serious contender and effectively compete against the other Dominions after the war, her entire policy needed the

injection of solid financial incentives. The solution was not to merely supply huge tracts of free land to British settlers who for the most part possessed insufficient capital to purchase seed, livestock and implements. Financial assistance was imperative as an inducement for the British agricultural immigrant to make a success. 'The average British emigrant is not going to be content', warned Smith, 'with a piece of bald prairie, and nothing on it but the sky'.<sup>38</sup> There was no question, in his mind, that the best and cheapest emigration agent was a satisfied settler.<sup>39</sup> But this would occur only if Canada had made the necessary financial and administrative preparations beforehand.

Charles Magrath, chairman of the Canadian section of the International Joint Commission, agreed. He firmly believed that the cataclysm in Europe offered a tremendous opportunity for Canada's continued economic growth. The war would undoubtedly provide the impetus for many Europeans to make a fresh start and a new life overseas. Conversely, the war offered Canada an excellent chance to update her immigration policy and procedures to ensure a more systematic approach to land settlement; and hence the national wealth and prosperity which accompanied a successful settlement policy. The future demanded, according to Magrath:

a new immigration policy based upon more courageous lines than in the past; it means a system in which the efforts of Governments - Dominion and Provincial - and corporations, working with full knowledge of each others plans and in harmony with each other in the common work; it means the expenditure of large sums of money in some system of control of agriculturists....In short it is the very largest and by far the most important question facing the people of Canada, as it is only through a reasonably successful solution of this question that it will be possible for Canada to march out into the open again and forge ahead in the immediate future.<sup>40</sup>

The task would be enormous, he warned, because of the size, character and diversification of Canada's agricultural settlement areas. One problem was to attract the right class of settler who would stay on the land. Another would be to facilitate the settlers' efforts into bringing the land under production. Organisation and cooperation at all levels of government and business was essential. He suggested the formation of a national committee representative of each province and those corporations who possessed land for settlement. A three-man executive comprised of 'men of affairs' would oversee the framing of a

new immigration policy. Magrath insisted that the executive should not be occupied by departmental personnel. 'They are largely controlled by rules and regulations, and no great work can be followed and developed under fixed departmental rules. An executive of three men from the outside would do much to vitalise the service and would give the departmental officers that support so necessary in vigorously pushing forward an entirely new venture'.<sup>41</sup>

In October 1915 Borden appointed the Natural Resources Commission to examine questions of agricultural production, immigration, colonisation, transportation and domestic trade. It was composed, not of civil servants, but of farmers, labour leaders and prominent businessmen.<sup>42</sup> In March 1916 a special Senate committee was appointed to help the Commission with its enormous task. Its specific focus was to make an appeal for cooperation and information to all organised bodies in Canada in helping the Commission fulfil its mandate. The organised bodies targeted comprised of municipalities, school boards, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, universities, church groups, farm, labour, professional, press and manufacturing associations, and various branches of the provincial and federal governments.<sup>43</sup>

The Commission's report was published in the summer of 1916 and it appeared to support Magrath's ideas about immigration presented privately the previous spring. The report advocated the formation of an Immigration and Colonisation Board independent of the Department of the Interior but responsible to the minister. The arrangement would safeguard the new board from bureaucratic restrictions which destroyed 'initiative [and] constructive and aggressive work'.<sup>44</sup> W. J. Roche, Minister of the Interior, was infuriated by the report. First, he found it extremely difficult reconciling the board's independence with its alleged responsibility to the minister. As far as he was concerned, the Commission had put the cart before the horse because of its emphasis on the machinery rather than the policy. As well, no new policy had been suggested nor had the Commission recommended the continuance of the old policy with the necessary modifications to meet post-war circumstances. Roche then went on the offensive.

[W]hile the report contains what in my opinion is an unjustifiable condemnation of our past policy, there is nothing suggested as to the particular features that are at fault, or what different policy should be adopted to take its place. It is true it generalises on the lack of initiative, constructive ability and aggressive methods,

etc. of the Department, but with the exception of recommending additional officials by the creation of a Board of Immigration and Colonisation it is itself lacking in initiative and constructive ability and fails to indicate what aggressive methods should be resorted to.<sup>45</sup>

Despite Roche's dismissal of the Commission's recommendations pressure mounted within the Immigration Branch for a more aggressive policy. Throughout 1917, Smith and J. Bruce Walker, Commissioner of Immigration at Winnipeg, pleaded with Ottawa to end 'the policy of restriction of effort and retrenchment in expenditure' on emigration propaganda. Both men called for a vigorous resumption of an immediate and wide-spread propaganda campaign. While recognising that the policy pursued since August 1914 had been proper, prudent and totally justified in light of the impositions the war was placing on labour and the economy, they pointed out that settlement was a 'theme of universal conversation' in the countless number of military hospitals and convalescent homes in Britain. These facilities provided an excellent starting point to disseminate literature, advice and information and no better occasion existed to 'renew, reinvigorate, revive and extend' Canadian operations to safeguard against competition from other Dominions.<sup>46</sup> Walker warned that Canada would suffer a tremendous loss of prestige, influence and manpower if she allowed herself to be outstripped and pushed aside by less experienced but more aggressive competitors.

Walker insisted there was an important domestic reason for pursuing an energetic immigration policy in Britain. Nativist fear and distrust of foreigners were growing, intensified by the war. Fuelled by wartime propaganda, many Canadians questioned the wisdom of an unselective immigration policy. Germans, Austrians, Ukrainians and other aliens, though good settlers, were not held to be good citizens because of their separate existence on the prairies and their resistance to the Canadian way of life. The Anglo-Saxon character of Canada had to be firmly re-established with good British stock because it was just the 'material for welding together all these composite foreign elements into a strong and great nation'.<sup>47</sup>

W. D. Scott completely disagreed with his field agents' assessments. He was annoyed with the overabundance of articles discussing Canada's immigration policy after the war and speeches exalting the assured doubling of its population. Canadian authorities would be kept busy absorbing returning veterans and readjusting to a

peacetime economy. Besides, normal Atlantic passenger services were not likely to recommence for twelve to eighteen months after hostilities ceased. Demands for repatriating Dominion forces eliminated the need, at present, 'to engage in or prepare for an active immigration policy'.<sup>48</sup> Scott tried to reassure Smith that Canada need not fear serious competition from other Dominions because numerous opportunities existed for the 'suitable immigrant to improve his circumstances'.<sup>49</sup> By virtue of Canada's geographical position she held the advantage in immigration matters over South Africa and the Antipodes. Therefore, as late as August 1917, Scott did not think his department should embark upon an advertising campaign in Britain. The presence of 300,000 Canadian troops in Europe was not 'likely to be completely overshadowed and forgotten by the frantic efforts of Australia to impress upon Imperial or overseas soldiers the merits of her offer to [soldier] settlers'.<sup>50</sup> A large Canadian presence was the best and cheapest form of advertisement.

### SECTION 3.3: MAINTAINING A TRADITION

Despite the fact that soldiers in the past had proven inadequate and ineffective settlers the Canadian government launched a determined soldier settlement policy in late 1915. As two Canadian historians remark, a post-war soldier settlement scheme was inescapable. 'It was unprecedented and therefore unthinkable that a war could end without some effort being made to settle soldiers on the land. Tradition, mythology, and concern about rural depopulation overruled memories of the waste and failure of "military bounty"'.<sup>51</sup> Canadians simply assumed that returning veterans would be offered farms as they had previously; and soldiers themselves had no reason to think any differently than their civilian counterparts. Sir Robert Borden, Canada's wartime Prime Minister, reassured servicemen that it was the solemn intention of both the nation and his government to 'prove to the returned man [their] just and due appreciation of the inestimable value of the services rendered to the country and empire'.<sup>52</sup>

Canadians did not deny that defending democracy and empire was expensive. Nor did the daily sacrifices and hardships encountered by their troops go unnoticed or unappreciated. The enormous display of patriotic fervour, in particular from English-speaking Canada, was proof



enough, and it quickly reinforced Canadian society's already strong sense of obligation and indebtedness to her fighting men.<sup>53</sup> In this extremely emotional and highly charged atmosphere soldier settlement was one constructive method of demonstrating Canada's recognition of these sacrifices. However, land as a reward for services rendered was not soldier settlement's only appealing attribute. Far from it. Underlying the patriotic rhetoric were practical political, social and economic considerations which dictated the pursuit of a comprehensive soldier settlement policy.

Soldier settlement remained an important supplement to the federal government's predominant and traditional role in settling and developing the agricultural resources of western Canada. This was reiterated in a memorandum submitted to the Minister of the Interior, W. J. Roche, by W. D. Scott, during the initial policy stages of soldier settlement in early February 1916. Scott argued that Canada was still fundamentally an agricultural country and therefore it was in the national interest to ensure that the largest possible proportion of those soldiers 'fitted for or willing to undertake agricultural work [be] induced or assisted to do so'.<sup>54</sup> Inevitably, it became one of the most expensive planks in Borden's reconstruction programme.

Walter Scott, Saskatchewan's first premier, heartily endorsed his unrelated federal colleague's assessment.<sup>55</sup> The settlement of returned men on the land fulfilled the object of populating and developing the remainder of Canada's vast and empty fertile regions. He firmly believed that Canada's most urgent problem, next to the successful prosecution of the war, was the question of how to increase the country's agricultural population and production. 'That will be the chief problem after the war, as it was before the war, and as it is during the war', he prophesied.<sup>56</sup> Soldier settlement provided a partial solution.

More significantly, soldier settlement 'represented the first indication that the Canadian government viewed the land as its principal solution to unemployment'.<sup>57</sup> As in Britain, many Canadians feared that when the war ended there would be many unemployed and dissatisfied veterans which, if left unsatisfied, could pose a threat to the political and social stability of the country. The threat of social unrest, which gripped every Allied government after 1918, therefore provided additional motivation for the Canadian government to act decisively to this potentially dangerous problem. A complementary but

quite distinctive view was the idea that agricultural communities were healthier and more stable, politically and socially, than urban ones. The rural myth was not unique to Canada for each Allied combatant possessed its own version. In Canada, the rural myth was expressed in the popular social philosophy of the back-to-the-land movement; an agrarian backlash aimed at halting rural depopulation brought about by increased industrialisation and urbanisation and the subsequent destruction of society's moral fibre that it implied.

Senator Sir James Lougheed was appointed by Borden, in July and October 1915, as chairman of two commissions which not only initiated the development of a national soldier settlement plan, but spearheaded the government's entire demobilisation policy and its investigation into the larger issue of Canada's post-war reconstruction problems. Lougheed, a lawyer by profession, had been government leader in the Senate and Minister without Portfolio since Borden's election victory of 1911. Ontario born, Lougheed had migrated west to Calgary and established one of the most successful law firms in western Canada. Extremely wealthy, Lougheed had married wisely, virtually inheriting his father-in-law's Senate seat in 1889. In July 1915, he was appointed chairman of the Military Hospitals Commission (MHC), the agency which provided retraining and rehabilitation for Canada's war disabled. Its major tasks included the reception and placement of wounded soldiers, the purchase, maintenance and management of convalescent hospitals and sanatoria, vocational training and the provision of artificial limbs.<sup>58</sup>

The provinces established their own Returned Soldiers' Aid Commissions to work in conjunction with the federal authority but their duties were narrowly defined as assisting able-bodied soldiers with employment problems. Full financial responsibility for retraining and re-educating the disabled for future employment fell squarely on the shoulders of the federal government. 'The war is a national undertaking', stated Premier William Hearst of Ontario, 'and there is no desire that we should shoulder responsibility that should properly rest elsewhere'.<sup>59</sup> Hearst was correct in stressing national responsibility for the incapacitated soldier and it became painfully obvious that the provinces did not want to be saddled with the enormous monetary and administrative headaches rehabilitation implied. It seemed ironic that the provinces should so easily delineate federal-provincial jurisdiction on this issue when, in education for example, both levels of government had fought each other so bitterly for control.

The provincial premiers were also worried that returned soldiers would add to the steady stream of people already leaving the rural areas for the cities. At the inter-provincial conference held in Ottawa in October 1915 the premiers voted unanimously in favour of supporting a soldier settlement scheme. However, they argued that the complexities of the issue were 'national' and beyond the scope of provincial jurisdiction. They advised that the federal government institute a special inquiry to investigate the matter.<sup>60</sup> Once again, Ottawa was forced to pick up the slack and frame a returned soldiers' agricultural resettlement scheme.

It seemed a natural progression to Borden also to give Lougheed the chairmanship of the Natural Resources Commission in October. The new commission was in part created to placate a mayoral delegation which had descended upon Ottawa in the spring of 1915. The delegation had complained bitterly about the chronic unemployment in the cities during the previous winter. They demanded money to boost municipal relief programmes and requested that the urban poor should somehow be relocated and re-established on the land.<sup>61</sup> Borden, while promising to investigate the matter, quickly realised that the combination of the two commissions under one person would go far to meet the parallel demands of the premiers and mayors to deal with rural depopulation. He struck upon the idea to expand upon the mayors' protestations and use the Natural Resources Commission as a springboard to launch the government's examination of the larger issue of Canada's post-war problems. In light of the recommendations of the inter-provincial conference the Commission seemed a perfect instrument through which a national soldier settlement plan could be formulated. With Lougheed as chairman it became a foregone conclusion.

W. J. Black, the former principal of the Manitoba Agricultural College, was chosen as secretary of the Natural Resources Commission.<sup>62</sup> An experienced administrator, Black was a wise choice as he was familiar with the problems of western development and land settlement. Lougheed's foresight shone through once again with the appointment of Ernest Henry Scammell as secretary to the MHC. Born in England, Scammell was the son of E. T. Scammell, founder and secretary of the NMEL. The younger Scammell was 'one of those officials a wise organisation cherishes', as he possessed enormous amounts of energy and administrative expertise.<sup>63</sup> It was Henry Scammell, more than any other individual, who shaped and moulded Canada's demobilisation and

rehabilitation policies.

The urgency with which Canadian politicians and civil servants viewed the problem of continued rural depopulation, and the seriousness with which they viewed soldier settlement as a partial solution, was echoed by Henry Scammell. 'One difficulty to be faced', he reported, 'will be that men from the country districts will be inclined to congregate in the larger centres'. Conversely, 'large numbers of men who previously followed an indoor occupation, both those who are able-bodied and those who are partially disabled, will after their long open air life in the trenches, decide to find employment on the land'.<sup>64</sup> The young Scammell had reached the same conclusion as Sir Arthur Pearson, the blind publisher and founder of St. Dunstan's Hostel for blind ex-servicemen in London's Regent's Park. Agriculture was a vital step in the retraining and rehabilitation of the disabled veteran, according to Pearson. He was able to persuade many blind veterans that poultry farming provided a practicable occupational alternative.<sup>65</sup>

W. D. Scott felt duty bound to offer practical solutions in the face of such 'lunacy' propounded by 'theorists' such as Pearson. He completely disagreed with the idea that soldiers who had lost an arm or leg would not be hampered to any great extent in their efforts to farm. He confined his attention 'solely to those who upon return are physically fit, express a desire for a rural life and have the physical strength necessary for the hard work' farming demanded.<sup>66</sup> He divided the group into two categories, experienced and inexperienced. Inexperienced candidates would be administered through the Department of the Interior and its various agencies such as the Immigration and Dominion Lands Branch. They would be placed with reliable farmers at current wages for one year in order to gain the instruction, advice and experience necessary to manage their own farm.

Scott proposed that two sections in each township, as yet ungranted, be reserved exclusively for returned soldiers for a period of four years. He singled out the Peace River District of northern Alberta as a specific target for future development and suggested that all the odd numbered sections be similarly reserved. Instead of the customary homestead grant of 160 acres, qualified soldiers should be allowed 320 acres. He recommended that full cooperation by the provinces should be solicited and that they be encouraged to offer similar inducements on land administered by them or assist by purchasing improved land for resale to the soldier settler. Scott also advocated the immediate

incorporation of a '"Returned Soldier Colonising Society" directed by leading capitalists of [a] philanthropic and patriotic turn of mind'.<sup>67</sup> Funding for the scheme would be provided by the society through a floatation of bonds guaranteed by the federal government. Advances up to \$1,000 would be available to each homesteading soldier and used as a downpayment or an advance on a lien. Interest would be charged and no patent would be issued until the loan was repaid in full. Eligibility was limited to honourably discharged soldiers who had either enlisted in Canadian regiments or been domiciled in Canada prior to their enlistment with Allied units. Finally, candidates had to satisfy government selection officers that they possessed sufficient expertise and practical farming knowledge to make a go of their new vocation. In order to ensure success and foster greater responsibility and independence among the soldier settlers, Scott proposed that each settler be required to invest \$200 of his own capital.

Scott pondered that should the floatation of a loan by the proposed soldiers' colonising society prove unfeasible the merits of the project might warrant direct government participation as the central loan agency. 'To loan \$1,000 each to 20,000 soldier farmers', commented Scott, 'would take \$20,000,000'.

Consider the consequent benefit to the nation as a whole entirely outside of the patriotic aspect of providing for our soldiers. Fro[m] 1896 to 1911 the Dominion Government paid in bounties on pig iron, steel, lead and petroleum \$20,000,000 from which the country receives no return except the stimulus to trade. If the spending of this money is justifiable, surely the loaning of a like amount for at least as important a purpose needs no justification.<sup>68</sup>

Scott's suggestion that the Canadian government underwrite the financial burden of soldier settlement and undertake the leading role in policy formulation was reinforced when the British government made preliminary enquiries concerning Canadian soldier settlement policy in October 1915.

The Colonial Office had received a proposal for a privately sponsored colonisation scheme in Canada from a consortium in the fruit-growing Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. They immediately forwarded the proposal to Ottawa and were promptly told by the Canadian Governor-General, the Duke of Connaught, that the Minister of the Interior refused to encourage any colonisation schemes proposed by private individuals. The majority of the private colonisation ventures in the past had been motivated by self-interest and had failed miserably

creating much hardship in the process.<sup>69</sup> The Canadian government made it absolutely clear that it was definitely unwilling to prejudice its national interests by endorsing privately sponsored schemes.

Lord Milner, however, approached the issue from a different tack. He had learned that Lionel Hitchens, a former member of his 'kindergarten' and now the managing director of the shipbuilding giant Cammell Laird, was embarking for Canada. He had been closely involved with land settlement in South Africa during the reconstruction period after the Boer War and was acquainted with its problems. Now he had been recruited by the Ministry of Munitions to investigate and expand Canada's munitions industry. Milner suggested that as he was going over on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions he could also investigate post-war land settlement in Canada in a private capacity.<sup>70</sup> Milner realised the British government did not want to give the impression that it supported the emigration of its soldiers after the war. But he warned Bonar Law that as many soldiers would leave Britain after the war no matter what the government did to encourage them to stay, it was much better to see them settle in the Dominions than 'drift off' to the United States or the Argentine. He warned that there would be nothing but 'appalling muddle and waste...in the hurry and scramble' upon the cessation of hostilities, unless the main principles of a land settlement policy had been carefully 'thought out and laid down beforehand'.<sup>71</sup>

Milner was convinced that it was essential for the Dominions to make advance preparations if they wanted to obtain the quality and quantity of British emigrants they had so eagerly sought prior to the war. He was anxious that such a golden opportunity supplied by Hitchens's visit to Canada should not be squandered by either the Imperial or Dominion government. Hitchens had cultivated a good relationship with Borden and his cabinet colleagues and this provided additional leverage. 'It is not a question of this Gov[ernment] doing anything or of dictating to Canada', explained Milner, 'but only of a shove-off, which may lead to their doing the right thing on their own account'. Bonar Law acquiesced and drafted a letter to Borden along the lines suggested by Milner.<sup>72</sup>

Borden's reply to the Colonial Secretary and the record of the meeting between Borden and Hitchens has not survived. Nevertheless, the report by the Ontario Commission on Unemployment, released in early 1916, provided Milner, Bonar Law and the Colonial Office with an

opportunity to analyse Canada's response to the question of British post-war migration and the employment of ex-servicemen after the war.<sup>73</sup> The Commission was originally appointed to examine the recurrent causes of permanent unemployment in Ontario. It was not empowered to investigate unemployment arising out of the war. However, from a British perspective, the report offered a few interesting ideas and impressed the vice-chairman of the EIO, T. C. Macnaghten.<sup>74</sup>

One important result derived from the Commission's investigations was its recommendation for the establishment in London of an Imperial Migration Board. The Board would represent the British and those Dominion, provincial and state governments interested in promoting and improving migration within the empire. Jointly funded by the participating levels of government, the central agency would be responsible for the collection and dissemination of accurate, impartial and up-to-date information concerning imperial labour markets, occupations, industries, travel costs and accommodation.<sup>75</sup> The advocacy of an aggressive inter-Imperial migration and land settlement policy was aimed at checking the population drain to foreign countries so as 'to conserve British manhood for the development of British territory and the support and defence of British institutions against future contingencies'.<sup>76</sup> It also recognised the need for an extensive review of the system of subsidising shipping and booking agencies. To increase efficiency, the report recommended more adequate inspection of immigrants; and to ensure greater success amongst newcomers, it stated that each immigrant should possess a minimal amount of cash upon landing. Above all, it alerted the Ontario government of its pressing moral obligation to discharged British and Canadian soldiers. It warned that a serious economic and social crisis would result after the war if steps were not taken during hostilities to formulate a comprehensive employment policy for these men before their return.<sup>77</sup>

Macnaghten was encouraged by the Commission's findings. That it supported an inter-Imperial migration policy was 'a considerable advance on anything connected with post-war emigration which has yet reached us from the Dominions'.<sup>78</sup> Although he could not find anything in the report to indicate that the Commission supported the granting of free land to ex-soldiers, or that its views had the endorsement of the Ontario government, it was clear that it had some influence. He remained cautious on the question whether it was desirable to encourage emigration from Britain after the war and whether the Dominions really

wanted British ex-soldiers. But, he admitted, the soldiers themselves would certainly demand the opportunity to emigrate and would doubtless receive the wholehearted support of the 'well intentioned' emigration enthusiasts. Macnaghten concluded that it would be 'difficult to check the emigration movement [and] keep it in the right channels in the absence of fuller information' hitherto received from the Dominions.<sup>79</sup>

#### SECTION 3.4: THE RIDER HAGGARD MISSION 1916

Macnaghten may have been encouraged by the unofficial statements uttered by one provincial agency, but he, like the rest of the Colonial Office, hardly expected the resounding support Rider Haggard received in the Dominions during his tour. The tour captured the public's imagination and turned what was simply a fact-finding mission into a tremendous public relations victory for the RCI over an intransigent British government.

Initially, the Council of the RCI confined the tour to Australia and New Zealand. George McLaren Brown, European General Manager of the CPR and an active member of the ELSC, was responsible for expanding the original itinerary. He argued that if Haggard confined his mission strictly to the Antipodes the imperial character of the mission would entirely disappear.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, he strongly recommended that Haggard proceed to the Antipodes via South Africa and return to England via Canada. The ELSC forwarded the resolution to the Council which wholeheartedly endorsed McLaren Brown's suggestion at its first meeting of 1916. On 3 January, Haggard received his instructions to proceed to the four 'white' Dominions.<sup>81</sup>

In mid-January, Smith enquired about the mandate Haggard had been given on behalf of the RCI. He also queried whether the British government had delegated its authority to the RCI to enter into discussions with the Canadian government or had the authority been invested to Haggard?<sup>82</sup> Sir Harry Wilson, honorary secretary of the RCI, replied that the British government had raised no objections to Haggard's mission in a private capacity as the RCI's honorary representative. He emphasised, however, that Haggard had 'full discretion' to discuss land settlement questions with the Dominion and provincial governments.<sup>83</sup> The Assistant Superintendent of Emigration



became increasingly hostile.

I...quite fail to understand why there should be any attempt to educate the Canadian Government and our Department on business which has been their public duty for so many years...I do not quite see what advantage there would be in you discussing the matter with me, so long as neither the Home Government have invited the assistance of any outsiders in connection with business which is obviously the first duty of this Department.<sup>84</sup>

Canada had been settling thousands of people satisfactorily for years with no outside assistance. Did the RCI actually think it had anything different to offer? 'I have received no hint that our Department is at all unable to carry on its business here and in Canada', Smith commented acidly, 'without calling for the assistance of others'.<sup>85</sup> Wilson attempted to reason with Smith and offered him an opportunity to discuss the matter in a friendly, rational manner. He reiterated that the RCI had absolutely no intention of interfering with the practices and policies of the Canadian government.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, he failed to de-fuse Smith's anger.

Smith's wrath was endless and he levelled another broadside at the RCI. He strongly objected to its soliciting of certain Canadian companies for monetary contributions for a mission conducted in an honorary capacity. 'I must confess that the last mentioned arrangement surpasses anything I have supposed could happen in connection with such a matter, and I would strongly recommend the Council to reconsider their whole attitude in this proceeding, if they wish to retain the record of the Royal Colonial Institute'.<sup>87</sup> He concluded that the Canadian government had appointed the Natural Resources Commission whose mandate included the investigation of the emigration of ex-servicemen to Canada after the war. Was it now not obvious to the RCI the superfluity of the Haggard mission? Wilson terminated the correspondence but Smith's intense hostility cast a dark shadow over the Canadian visit.

Smith had other reasons for not supporting or encouraging Haggard's visit to Canada. In a personal letter to Cory and written in language reminiscent of similar Colonial Office vitriol, he confided that Haggard was the last person in the world to be sent on such a task.<sup>88</sup> The condemnation was based on a similar mission Haggard undertook in 1905 when he had investigated the Salvation Army colonies in the United States at the bequest of the then Colonial Secretary, Alfred Lyttelton. His findings were deemed impractical and dismissed in

an official report of a departmental committee assigned to review Haggard's recommendations. Furthermore, he warned Ottawa that the RCI had a reputation for 'rushing in where angels fear to tread....It seems to forget so frequently that Governments, like ours, have their own views and their own machinery for carrying out Canada's policy'. The RCI had to learn that Canada was quite capable of conducting its own business without outside interference and that land settlement and post-war migration were 'too serious and of too great import to be peddled around [by] well-intentioned gentlemen [who] often create an atmosphere which does not facilitate the real work of negotiations between Governments'.<sup>89</sup>

Smith's scathing remarks generated deep concern at the RCI as it was feared his reaction and subsequent encounter with Wilson would be conveyed to his superiors in Ottawa. As a countermeasure the RCI attempted to clarify their position to the Canadian High Commissioner, Sir George Perley. Wilson wrote Perley that Sir Charles Lucas, a former EIO chairman and currently chairman of the Council of the RCI, was 'very anxious that there should be no misapprehension about [Haggard's] visit, which is purely private and unofficial'.<sup>90</sup> As a further reinforcement to the RCI's bridge building exercise, Haggard called on Perley to inform him of the exact object of his visit and to inform him that the last thing he wished to do was to compete, 'or in any possible way interfere with any existing Commission, Committee, or Society concerned with immigration' to Canada.<sup>91</sup> Wilson's last-minute instructions to Haggard continued to reflect the RCI's deep-seated concern over Canadian attitudes. Opposition in Canada was expected and if Smith's hostility was an indication of what Haggard could expect in Canada the situation was depressingly grim. Therefore, upon arrival in Vancouver, if any resistance was encountered from the federal government, Haggard was to halt the inquiry immediately and limit his enquiries to those requested by the reactivated DRC before returning directly to England.<sup>92</sup>

When Haggard arrived in Canada in late June he found no sign of opposition. Instead, his reception in Victoria, British Columbia 'was striking and indeed enthusiastic' and included front page coverage in the local newspaper.<sup>93</sup> He was met by the all too familiar host of local businessmen and civic dignitaries and by E. H. Scammell, who had been despatched by Loughheed to escort Haggard across Canada. The schedule was hectic and he was kept extremely busy in Victoria with numerous public speaking engagements. It was at the Veterans Club, of

which Rider's brother Andrew was president, where Rider pointed out that during his tour he had encountered some 'very liberal ideas' as to the issue of soldier settlement but apparently 'hardly any plans of a concrete nature for translating these ideas into action'.<sup>94</sup> He implored his audiences of the necessity for the empire to marshall its resources, coordinate its policies and concentrate its energies in an attempt to avoid overlapping and duplication of settlement and migration work conducted by private agencies and governments. Haggard emphasised the necessity for drawing up a 'working plan' which could be ready for operation once the war was over.<sup>95</sup>

The initial Canadian response was pleasantly surprising. Local, provincial and federal authorities were willing to listen, cooperate and exchange ideas and information with the RCI representative. His reception was warm, the outlook encouraging and opposition non-existent, but he was very careful to explain that he had no 'special scheme' and that he was on a 'mission of enquiry'.<sup>96</sup> The Vancouver World reported that Haggard had the 'welfare of the empire at heart' and that his opinions, ideas and advice on land settlement questions were 'based on study and experience, of a very wide and varied character [which] must command respect'.<sup>97</sup> However, Haggard remained cautiously optimistic and followed Wilson's instructions to the letter.

The apparent change of heart by Canadian authorities was being monitored by Wilson in London. Just prior to Haggard's arrival in Canada, Wilson informed Haggard that the Canadians were aware of his progress in Australia and New Zealand. He also reported that he had received very favourable responses from Borden and Lougheed which took 'the sting out of our friend Obed Smith's dog-in-the-manger communications'.<sup>98</sup> McLaren Brown had worked diligently to counteract any damage Smith had inflicted and it was largely through his influence that the 'mischief' undertaken by the Assistant Superintendent was rectified.<sup>99</sup> As well, Henry Scammell had proven to be a loyal ally by dispelling any misapprehensions that arose in Ottawa. Wilson was satisfied that Smith's 'interference' had been effectively removed and that the RCI could 'confidently expect no further trouble in Canada'.<sup>100</sup>

Haggard's message was simple and straightforward. He was deeply concerned about the mass exodus of British subjects who settled in countries outside the empire. The loss of such large numbers of good British stock was tragic, unnecessary and had to be curtailed if the

British empire was to remain a vibrant international power. Personally, Haggard did not favour the emigration of British citizens to any overseas destinations. 'But if they insist on leaving', he explained, 'we want to try and take care that they leave for some place where the British flag flies'.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, in a hot and sultry Regina, he hoped to see 'this empire of ours one house with many rooms, in each of which its citizens may wander, knowing that there he is at home'.<sup>102</sup>

Soldier settlement, he told his listeners, was an attempt to solve the problem of emigration erosion. He made it quite clear to provincial and federal leaders that British veterans returning home after the war would find little or no support, financial or otherwise, from the British government or private institutions and charities. He hoped, that if promises of free grants of land and financial assistance were forthcoming from the Dominions, extra pressure would be exerted on British authorities to support the imperial project. At the same time Haggard made it perfectly clear that the RCI's ELSC was not in existence to advocate and promote emigration. Nonetheless, it was fundamentally more important to prepare for the eventuality of post-war migration and set the wheel in motion than patiently wait for the British government to initiate a plan once hostilities ended.

The enthusiastic Canadian response was inspired by the same patriotic fervour which had inspired the mission. The press surrendered their front pages and gave detailed reports as he travelled across the prairies. The Edmonton Journal proclaimed that the success of the mission was 'vital' to Canada's future while other editorials demanded every effort be made to encourage and formulate Haggard's efforts into a constructive framework.<sup>103</sup> Congratulations and warm wishes flooded in and as the mission progressed eastwards across western Canada the offers of land and concessions increased. A. R. U. Corbett, Haggard's private secretary during the mission, was not surprised. When the Australian leg was near completion he informed Wilson that the Canadian reaction to Australia's exuberant response would prove very interesting indeed. Corbett had predicted that the Canadian authorities 'will of course want to go one better and it will be rather amusing'.<sup>104</sup> And so it was.

Some reservations were expressed, however. Walter Scott, the premier of Saskatchewan, agreed that any soldier settlement scheme required careful settler selection. 'Not all ex-Service men will be found adapted for or willing to become farm settlers and it will not help the situation to send out men who should be foredoomed to

failure'.<sup>105</sup> He urged success would be determined by how much of a fair start the soldier settler could be guaranteed. The implementation of a comprehensive advance loan policy embodied in the settlement scheme was imperative.

The Canadian Pacific Railway took the opportunity of Haggard's visit and disclosed its plans to provide farms on its extensive holdings in western Canada for returning veterans from Canada and Britain. The plans were provisional and consisted of two settlement methods. A system of assisted colonisation would provide the returned soldier with the opportunity of selecting his own farm on unsold CPR land in predetermined districts. Building material, equipment and livestock would be provided by the company on a long term repayment scheme. The second approach was the 'Ready Made Farm' system. Farms would be built and fully stocked prior to the soldier settler's arrival. Groups of fifty or more farms would be constructed to form a colony in which a demonstration farm and a central stores depot would be located administered by a CPR colony superintendent. Strict selection practices were advocated necessitated by previous experience.<sup>106</sup> The proposals had been under discussion since the beginning of 1916 but the chairman of the CPR's advisory committee, J. S. Dennis, notified his associates that Haggard should only receive a general outline and that none of the information should be published because of its highly tentative nature.<sup>107</sup>

Lougheed also supported the ready-made farm principle advocated by the CPR and J. H. Sherrard, President of the Canadian Manufacturers Association.<sup>108</sup> He too took the opportunity, supplied by Haggard's visit, to release the report of the Natural Resources Commission. The report assumed that returning veterans who made their homes on the land stood a better chance of leading a healthier, more prosperous life compared to soldiers employed in urban areas. Farming experience was not essential because the proposed soldiers' colonies would be designed to provide the occupational and managerial expertise required. The colonies would provide schools, churches, stores and a central training farm for prospective settlers. Each colonist was entitled to 160 acres and loans to a maximum of \$1,500.<sup>109</sup>

The premiers of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba cordially invited Haggard to discuss the mission and gave their support reminding him, however, that the three prairie provinces had no control over Crown land. Nevertheless, as he swept across western Canada, the momentum he

generated strengthened his position once he arrived in Ottawa for discussions with Borden and his cabinet. Haggard met with a cabinet sub-committee on 18 July 1916 comprised of Sir Thomas White, Minister of Finance, Martin Burrell, Minister of Agriculture, T. W. Crothers, Minister of Labour and Lougheed. His proposals received a sympathetic ear and when he met with Borden the following day the Canadian Prime Minister stated that he had a 'very agreeable interview with him'.<sup>110</sup>

The Prime Minister also assured Haggard that a soldier settlement policy would be introduced to Parliament in the near future and he similarly reassured him that everything would be done to promote the immigration and settlement of British soldiers. Haggard was pleased and the interview with Borden embodied all he sought.<sup>111</sup> He had much to be satisfied about but Haggard was not naive. He advised the RCI to remain cautious.

Now, at any rate, they have given their public promise from which they cannot and will not wish to recede. In any event it seems to me wise to let the glory rest with them and not to claim too much for our efforts. Perhaps the chief value of these lay, not so much in my arguments, as in the fact that I was able to show them that they had the Provincial Governments and the population of Canada behind them in anything that they might choose to do. Of this there could be no doubt after the very remarkable success of the meetings which I addressed in the various Provinces - for remarkable it was.<sup>112</sup>

Unfortunately, certain influential people in the federal government were not as enthusiastic about Haggard's mission. The Solicitor-General and future Minister of the Interior, Arthur Meighen, was not overly impressed: '[Haggard] laid before us nothing whatever except a very general desire that we do something substantial in the way of facilitating land settlement by British soldiers; which indeed anyone might have taken for granted'.<sup>113</sup> Meighen contrasted the lack of substance in Haggard's interview with the 'well digested...concrete and definite' settlement scheme recommended by the Natural Resources Commission.<sup>114</sup> However, the federal government were unenthusiastic about Lougheed's report as well. Cabinet ministers lacked the confidence in group settlements exuded by the CPR and Lougheed because years of experience had taught successive federal governments that group settlements spelled failure and hardship. Both Haggard and Lougheed were told by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior that no vacant townships existed close enough to railways to make such a colony

scheme viable.<sup>115</sup> It was evident that the Canadian government had its own ideas and would implement these ideas at its own pace. Although the Canadian government was not forthcoming, and possessed some serious reservations about the Haggard mission, it was a congenial host.<sup>116</sup>

### SECTION 3.5: SOLDIER SETTLEMENT IN 1917

It was the provinces, not the federal government, who initiated the first soldier settler schemes. The polite dismissal of Haggard's mission by senior officials in Ottawa was not accepted by Howard Ferguson, Ontario's energetic and enthusiastic Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines. Ontario was the first province to respond with a land settlement scheme for returned soldiers in February 1917. The province arranged to transport interned enemy aliens to the clay belt of northern Ontario near Kapuskasing to clear the dense forest for soldier settlement. Enemy internees were busily employed doing the back-breaking work of land clearance and road building, providing the basis of a reward and a fresh start for returned servicemen who had been fighting against the internees' own countrymen.<sup>117</sup> The Kapuskasing scheme proved extremely popular and was touted as Ontario's response to the back-to-the-land movement which was sweeping across Canada. In Ontario boosters painted an attractive picture of the resource potential of the north and the enormous economic benefits that could be derived from it. The development of 'New Ontario' or the 'true North' was being vigorously promoted and it had universal appeal. The pioneer settlement at Kapuskasing would be the important first step in the expansion and long-term exploitation of northern Ontario's natural riches.<sup>118</sup>

Once enough land had been cleared Ferguson proceeded with the colony. Five townships were set aside located between sixty and seventy miles west of Cochrane on the National Transcontinental Railway. Each settler was promised 100 acres (of which ten acres was pre-cleared) and a maximum of \$500 in provincial loans repayable within twenty years at 6% interest for the purchase of livestock and machinery.<sup>119</sup> A small sawmill was erected to complement the initial farming operations and provide additional revenue from the lumber produced during the land clearing. Horses, farm implements, wagons, sleighs and other heavy machinery were set aside in a community pool to assist the settler during the early stages of settlement. A training school was

established on the provincial government's demonstration farm at Monteith, thirty miles south of Cochrane. Instruction in agriculture, land clearing, stumping and logging was offered.<sup>120</sup>

The Kapuskasing colony was founded on a co-operative community basis. Provisions were made for the erection of a village complete with a school, administrative building, general store and laundry facilities. Ferguson placed great emphasis on the endless supply of good pulp wood in the region which he saw as a valuable winter income supplement for the settlers. There was also an enormous amount of road and bridge construction planned for the area which ensured the economic viability of the new settlement. Patents would be granted as long as the settler cleared two acres each year to the equivalent of 10% of the total acreage, resided continuously for three years and built a habitable home. Such economic diversity was sure to guarantee the project's success and the Department of Lands, Forests and Mines was confident that their greatest enemy to northern development - loneliness - would be defeated because of the communal and co-operative framework it had established in Kapuskasing. Every social amenity had been provided for including a gramophone, piano and billiard table.<sup>121</sup>

Isolation was categorised as the settler's gravest enemy by land settlement experts and colonisation enthusiasts alike. According to their argument, drought and pestilence were deemed inconsequential compared with the federal government's current system of settlement which encouraged solitude and retarded rural progress. The Ontario scheme and the CPR's soldier colonies and "Ready Made Farms" project illustrated that many people believed that successful agricultural development required co-operative methods and that the provision of social amenities to enhance social inter-action was considered essential.<sup>122</sup> Loughheed's report, released during Haggard's mission in 1916, testified that even some senior politicians had succumbed to the notion of soldier settlement colonies. The effect this idea would have on policy makers in Ottawa and the practicality of the soldier colony idea was another matter.

Ontario was particularly anxious to extend this settlement opportunity to all soldiers who had served in the British forces during the war.<sup>123</sup> In a despatch to the Colonial Office, The Duke of Devonshire, Governor-General of Canada, gave his endorsement of the settlement scheme and 'was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm' of the men who were on the land already cleared.<sup>124</sup> Ottawa also



noticed Ontario's initiative. Scammell recorded that Ontario was the only province to follow through and implement its land settlement legislation. He bitterly complained that the other provinces were quite content to sit back and wait for the federal government to provide funding.<sup>125</sup>

The initiative displayed by Ontario was not lost on either the British or Canadian governments. Borden responded by sending requests for information to each of the provincial premiers and his cabinet colleagues.<sup>126</sup> The replies were enthusiastic but raised a number of problems. The Saskatchewan government had not adopted or put into operation any policy to secure or assist British soldiers planning to settle in Canada. Cooperation was forthcoming and interest was keen but owing to the fact that Crown land was under federal jurisdiction in Saskatchewan it was not the province's responsibility to finance or adopt such a land settlement policy. Given more time and once the Dominion government had outlined its own policy Saskatchewan would be more definite in its plans of assistance.<sup>127</sup> Premier George Clark of New Brunswick informed Borden of his province's recently passed post-war settlement legislation and its ongoing attempts to establish prosperous, self-contained community settlements. The New Brunswick legislation was based on exactly the same foundation as Ontario's Kapuskasing project. The community settlement idea was aimed at those soldier settlers who required financial assistance, training and mutual support. Clark was confident of the scheme's success and reminded Borden that Imperial soldiers who desired to settle in New Brunswick after the war, and who possessed sufficient capital to make their enrollment in the community settlement project unnecessary, could purchase a previously cultivated farm in a productive locality through the Farm Settlement Board.<sup>128</sup>

Premier Brewster of British Columbia, though very supportive, believed that his province would be burdened with the greatest share of responsibility in a national soldier settlement scheme.<sup>129</sup> The prairie provinces and the maritimes had little or no public land to offer. It remained for Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia to take charge. Legislation had been passed during the last session, based on a report submitted in March 1916 by the provincial Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission, which made provision for land on co-operative farm settlements for local soldiers.<sup>130</sup> However, no final settlement details had been worked out. Brewster entertained other reservations.

It seems to me that before any comprehensive plan can be adopted for the Dominion as a whole there should be a convention called at Ottawa...to discuss not only the duties of the provinces in respect of returned soldiers and of citizens generally, but the relation which the Dominion should bear to collective responsibilities. There should be some clear line of demarcation of duty and responsibility as among the several bodies in whatever compact is proposed to be framed, and I do not think any government should commit itself to a programme until it is definitely known what all the other governments will do.<sup>131</sup>

Borden agreed, announcing to his provincial counterparts that the federal government had drafted some preliminary legislative proposals but that it was eager for provincial input. There was also the issue of the Colonial Office's December reminder concerning Dominion plans for British ex-servicemen. The Prime Minister announced that an inter-provincial land settlement conference would be held in Ottawa on 10-12 January 1917 to discuss these issues.<sup>132</sup>

The conference had two main objectives. 'A full, free and frank' discussion and exchange of ideas and information between the Dominion and provincial governments on how best to settle ex-servicemen after the war. More importantly, the question of inter-government cooperation and the 'satisfactory division of responsibility' with regard to increased loan facilities and the settlement of unused land under private ownership were key points under discussion.<sup>133</sup> The question of technical education was examined as well as the preferential employment of ex-soldiers in the civil service and on public works projects. However, it was universally recognised that the underlying objective behind the conference and the proposed legislation was the vital national necessity of increased agricultural production.<sup>134</sup> The Duke of Devonshire cabled Walter Long, Bonar Law's successor at the Colonial Office, that the conference had been interesting and revealing. '[W]ithout arriving at any very definite conclusions there was a useful interchange of ideas and good results may be expected to follow'. Long was pleased because the Canadian conference coincided with his attempts to examine the issue of post-war migration embodied in the Tennyson committee.<sup>135</sup>

Shortly after the conclusion of the conference a high powered cabinet committee composed of Roche, White, Burrell and Meighen were given the task of framing the appropriate legislation. Loughheed's absence was manifest. In May 1917 the Canadian government presented its legislation for the repatriation and re-establishment of its soldiers on

the land to the Canadian Parliament. The Soldier Settlement Act of 1917 was enacted to provide returning veterans with the opportunity of establishing themselves on a homestead.<sup>136</sup> This particular approach to land settlement emphasised the Canadian government's commitment to open up huge new areas of land for agricultural purposes. Roche stressed that the aim of the legislation was now two-fold: 'to assist the returned soldier and increase agricultural production'.<sup>137</sup> Admittedly, if the legislation proved attractive to the returned soldier, Roche believed it might provide an important measure to counteract the exodus of Canada's rural population to the cities. In some government circles officials believed that soldiers, as a class, would prove no exception to the above rule. The tendency to migrate to the metropolis still alarmed a growing number of Canadians concerned about the future of the country's social fabric.<sup>138</sup> One thing was certain. While recognising the sacrifices Canadian troops had made during the war the basic conception of the soldier settlement legislation was that it was not a military bounty. Rather, it was a plan for making brave men into competent farmers. As it was repeatedly emphasised in Parliament, in order to ensure maximum success the entire scheme had to be placed on sound business-like principles.<sup>139</sup>

The Act provided for the establishment of a three-man Soldier Settlement Board (SSB) which was empowered to grant loans to a maximum of \$2,500 at 5% interest for twenty years for the acquisition of land, livestock, and farm machinery. Loans could be applied to property already owned or leased by the returned soldier, or to lands he wished to purchase, or to the settlement of free Dominion lands in the prairie provinces. In the case of Dominion lands the Act authorised the reservation for soldier settlement of all undisposed-of land within fifteen miles of a railway. A free grant of 160 acres was allowed to each soldier applicant wanting to homestead in these reserves. In addition, the soldier could easily expand his operation and claim the standard homestead right of 160 acres providing he had not exhausted the privilege already. The beneficiaries of the Act were Canadians who had served overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) or as members of the Imperial forces and soldiers who had served with the Imperial forces and any self-governing Dominion or colony. Provision was also made for agricultural instruction of the inexperienced soldier settler, but no specifics were outlined.<sup>140</sup>

Roche proudly informed Parliament that Canada was doing its utmost

for the returned soldier and that its soldier settlement legislation was 'the most generous and practicable offer made by any British dominion'.<sup>141</sup> Liberal backbenchers, although not challenging the government's generosity, were sceptical of the legislation, in particular the type and location of the land being offered. Roche countered with the announcement that there were six-and-one half million acres of available Dominion land within ten miles of railways in western Canada. But he was forced to admit that not all of it was open prairie. A good portion was swampy marshland, thick scrub or dense forest which needed a large amount of money, time and backbreaking work to bring under cultivation.<sup>142</sup> This prompted one Liberal backbencher, W. H. Pugsley, to proclaim that the legislation did not go far enough for these very reasons. The available land was concentrated in the remote north central regions of the prairies, two thirds of which was in Alberta. He charged that the soldier settler should not be sent to these remote and isolated areas where he would very likely become discouraged and quickly abandon the homestead. He complained that it was highly doubtful that many soldiers wanted to lead the lonely life of a pioneer. 'Not one man in a thousand would be attracted by an invitation to settle on land in the Peace River country, six hundred miles north of the American boundary, where there are no settlers, no schools, churches or doctors'.<sup>143</sup> Pugsley suggested that the government exercise its right of expropriation and obtain land in established settlement districts for those who were not desirous of pioneer settlement. His advice was unfortunately ignored.

In the mean time, all concerned agreed that returned soldiers should not receive preferential treatment regarding land settlement. They should be treated as 'ordinary individuals, not as extraordinary persons'.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, this did not warrant throwing all caution to the wind. The primary fear echoed by one prairie politician and a Lands Branch official was the inadvisability of the federal government of embarking upon a settlement policy in which the majority of the participants were inexperienced. 'Unless a man evinces a desire to his own volition to go in for farming, and has had previous experience therein...legislation framed with this object in view is doomed to failure'.<sup>145</sup> Promises of agricultural training were extracted from Roche but it was evident from his cursory treatment of the subject that nothing concrete had been mapped out. For its part, the federal government ignored the opposition's calls for caution and greater

forethought.

From its inception it was evident that the Soldier Settlement Act of 1917 was aimed at achieving imperial self-sufficiency and cultural uniformity. Roche declared:

Fortunately for us....in this period of national crisis, we have had the preponderance of our population Canadian and British-born. It is therefore, in my opinion, of the greatest importance, not only from a sentimental but also from a national and economic standpoint, that we should maintain, to as great an extent as possible, the British element in our population...<sup>146</sup>

The response to this Act was disappointing for its architects as slightly more than 2,000 men took advantage of the scheme between 1917 and 1919.<sup>147</sup> The biggest problem was the type and location of the Dominion lands. The majority of the good and easily accessible land had been culled by homesteaders long before the war. Although thousands of productive, easily accessible acres remained unsettled they were in the hands of individual and corporate speculators. Dominion lands, located in the heavily forested and marshy inter-lake region of Manitoba, on the northern fringes of the park belt, in the Peace River country of north-western Alberta, or the semi-arid Palliser Triangle were extensive but isolated and marginally productive.<sup>148</sup> Farming operations in these areas demanded a large and immediate infusion of investment capital. Clearing land was a costly and slow business which consumed any initial returns gained in the early years. Ottawa's failure to incorporate the powers of expropriation into the SSB's mandate proved to be a glaring mistake. In 1918 it was announced that 85% of the 22 million acres of vacant Dominion land in the west had been deemed unacceptable because it was either agriculturally unsuitable or too far from the railway.<sup>149</sup> This effectively halved Roche's initial estimate. Equally significant, it was an admission of policy failure by the government. A new policy was needed and quickly.

## ENDNOTES

1. Until the 1970s, Canadian academics had not devoted serious attention to Canadian immigration policy between 1867 and 1939. Immigration studies had focused their attention on the settlement of a variety of ethnic groups rather than the policy which encouraged or enticed them to Canada. Even when the policy was examined it was approached within the narrow confines of an ethnic analysis. From a practical standpoint this was quite understandable as the study of one particular ethnic community in Canada's multicultural mosaic simplified the task of analysis. However, the concentration on regional and ethnic settlement policies has discouraged the examination of a more complete and comprehensive study of Canadian immigration policy. Only quite recently has significant attention been directed toward its formulation and implementation. Even so, there remain conspicuous gaps in Canadian immigration historiography.

Ironically, the one ethnic group which has not attracted serious academic interest, yet constituted one of the three largest sources of immigration to Canada, was the British immigrant. It has only been in the last ten years that Canadian historians have focussed their attention on British immigration and settlement in Canada between 1867 and 1939. A wide variety of scholarly work now exists on the migration of children, juveniles, domestics, harvesters, crofters and public school boys to Canada. Nevertheless, there remains no corresponding work of Canadian attitudes and policies towards British immigration for the period 1919-39 as there is for 1867-1914.

2. Norman Macdonald, Canada: Immigration and Colonisation 1841-1903 (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1966), pp. 96-7. Jurisdiction over immigration policy was later transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1892.

3. M. J. Barber, 'The Assimilation of Immigrants in the Canadian Prairie Provinces, 1896-1918: Canadian Perception and Canadian Policies', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1975, p. 26.

4. A Guide Book: Information for Intending Settlers, 5th ed. (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1884), p. 1.

5. Macdonald, p. 173.

6. Ibid., pp. 174-75.

7. Donald Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1978), pp. 7-9; Barber, p. 21.

8. Lewis H. Thomas, 'British Visitors' Perceptions of the West, 1885-1914', in A. W. Rasporich and H. C. Klassen, eds., Prairie Perspectives II (Toronto: Holt, Reinhart and Winston of Canada, Ltd., 1973), p. 184; R. G. Moyles and Doug Owrap, Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 114-39.

9. D. J. Hall, Clifford Sifton, I. The Young Napoleon 1861-1900 II. The Lonely Eminence 1901-1929 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981 and 1985), I, p. 123; ibid., 'Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy, 1896-1905', in Howard Palmer, ed., The Settlement of the West (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1977), pp. 60-85; Brown and Cook, p. 11.
10. J. W. Dafoe, Clifford Sifton in Relation to His Times (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1931), p. 105.
11. Hall, Clifford Sifton, I, pp. 255-57.
12. Ibid., p. 256.
13. Brown and Cook, p. 60; Gerald Freisen, The Canadian Prairies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 250-52.
14. Quotation cited in Glynn, p. 217. Also see David Smith, 'Instilling British Values in the Prairie Provinces', Prairie Forum, VI, 2 (1981), pp. 129-41; R. A. Wells, 'The Voice of Empire: The Daily Mail and British Emigration to North America', Historian, XLIII, 2 (1981), pp. 240-57.
15. Freisen, p. 246; Hall, Clifford Sifton, II, p. 192; quotation cited in Brown and Cook, p. 68.
16. Glynn, p. 217; Mabel F. Timlin, 'Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896-1910', Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, XXVI, 4 (1960), p. 518; D. M. McDougall, 'Immigration into Canada, 1851-1920', Canadian Journal of Economic and Political Science, XXVII, 2 (1961), pp. 162-75.
17. Barber, pp. 56-7.
18. Grey to Elgin, 18 January 1908, NA, Fourth Earl Grey Papers, vol. 14, f. 21, pp. 3882-3.
19. PRO, CO 885/20/misc. no. 242, Report by Butler on a visit to Canada (1909), p. 7.
20. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
21. PRO, CO 323/618/30094, report by Paton, June-July 1913.
22. Ibid.
23. Barber, p. 58.
24. Quotation cited in Avery, p. 26.
25. Glynn, pp. 229-31.
26. L. G. Reynolds, The British Immigrant (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1935), xvii; W. J. C. Cherwinski, 'Wooden Horses and Rubber Cows: Training British Agricultural Labour for the Canadian Prairies, 1890-1930', Canadian Historical Association Papers (1980), p. 133; Hawkes, Special Report, p. 10; Joy Parr, Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1980); Patrick Dunae, Gentlemen Emigrants (Toronto: Douglas and MacIntyre, 1981).

27. Avery, p. 21; Hawkes, Special Report, p. 30; Harold Troper, Only Farmers Need Apply (Toronto: Griffin Press Limited, 1972).
28. Freisen, p. 247; Avery, p. 27; Hall, Clifford Sifton, II, p. 192.
29. W. J. C. Cherwinski, 'The Incredible Harvest Excursion of 1908', Labour/Le Travailleur, V (Spring 1980), pp. 57-9; ibid., '"Misfits", "Malingerers" and "Malcontents": The British Harvester Movement of 1928', in John E. Foster ed., The Development of the West (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), pp. 273-6; J. H. Thompson, 'Bringing in the Sheaves: The Harvest Excursionists, 1890-1929', Canadian Historical Review, LIX, 4 (1978), pp. 467-89.
30. Ross McCormack, 'Cloth Caps and Jobs: The Ethnicity of English Immigrants in Canada 1900-1914', in Jorgen Dahlie and Tissa Fernando, eds., Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1981), pp. 38-55; ibid., 'Networks among British Immigrants and Accommodation to Canadian Society: Winnipeg, 1900-1914', Histoire sociale - Social History, XVII, 34 (November 1984), pp. 357-74; Paul Voisey, 'The Urbanisation of the Canadian Prairies, 1871-1914', Histoire sociale - Social History, VIII, 15 (May 1975), pp. 77-101.
31. NA, RG 76, vol. 5, f. 41, part 3, Cory to Scott, 19 August 1914; Scott memorandum, 8 October 1914; Scott to Cory, 3 September 1914; PRO, CO 323/726/52106, Macnaghten to Islington, Under-Secretary of State for India, 31 October 1916.
32. PRO, CO 323/761/11400, annual report of the EIO (1916); NA, RG 76, vol. 5, f. 41, part 3, Scott memorandum, 8 October 1914.
33. Canadian Annual Review (hereafter CAR), 1917, p. 321; George Brown, 'Western Problems and Immigration After the War', Proceedings of the Canadian Club, Toronto, XIII (1915-16), pp. 183-99; J. S. Dennis, 'Some of Canada's Problems', Addresses delivered before the Canadian Club of Montreal (1916-17), pp. 147-55. The Canadian Clubs were an extremely influential and enthusiastic network for professionals, businessmen and politicians interested in a variety of national and imperial issues. Established across the breadth of Canada they were highly regarded by many British dignitaries as 'a most useful institution' for the exchange of ideas and the maintenance of the imperial link. During his tour of Canada in 1916, Rider Haggard delivered all of his major speeches at the various branches of the Canadian Club. Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Richard Jebb Papers, Colonel James Allen to Jebb, 14 May 1913; Jebb to Allen, 12 July 1913.
34. NA, RG 76, vol. 5, f. 41, part 3, Smith to Scott, 6 March 1915.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., Smith to Scott, 9 December 1916.
39. Ibid., Smith to Scott, 26 June 1915.
40. Magrath memorandum, 15 March 1915, NA, C. A. Magrath Papers, vol. 3, f. 6, p. 802.



41. Ibid., p. 807. A copy of this memorandum was submitted by Magrath to the President of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Lord Shaughnessy, 26 March 1915.
42. CAR, 1916, p. 265.
43. Canada, Senate, Debates, 15 March 1916, pp. 136-7; Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter PAM), F. L. Beique, chairman of the Special Senate Committee on Agricultural, Industrial and Trade Development, to T. C. Norris, Premier of Manitoba, 15 August 1916, T. C. Norris Papers, Box 1, p. 462 and p. 464.
44. Roche to Borden, 18 September 1916, NA, G. H. Perley Papers, vol. 6, ff. 179.
45. Ibid.
46. NA, RG 76, vol. 5, f. 41, part 3, J. Bruce Walker to Scott, 7 June 1917; Walker to Cory, 24 August 1917; Walker to Scott, 7 June 1917; Smith to Scott, 8 August 1917. The threat of Australian and New Zealand competition was also aired in the Canadian press. See W. H. Kirchner, 'Canada's Immigration Policy After the War', Canada Monthly (October 1916), pp. 334-6.
47. Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 147-52; ibid., 'The True North Strong and Free', in P. Russell ed., Nationalism in Canada (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Ltd., 1966), pp. 3-26; John A. Cormie, 'The War and Immigration', Westminster Advertiser (January 1916), pp. 129-32; NA, RG 76, vol. 5, f. 41, part 3, Private J. M. Marcus to Walker, 18 July 1917.
48. NA, RG 76, vol. 5, f. 41, part 3, Scott to Smith, 21 November 1916.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., Scott to Cory, 22 March 1917.
51. Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, Winning the Second Battle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 100.
52. Quotation cited in H. C. Baker, Homes for Heroes (Saskatoon: Early Mailing Service, 1979), p. 2.
53. R. M. Bray, '"Fighting as an Ally": The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War', Canadian Historical Review, LXI, 2 (1980), pp. 141-68. Also see Desmond Morton, '"Junior but Sovereign Allies": The Transformation of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918', in Norman Hillmer and Philip Wigley, eds., The First British Commonwealth: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Mansergh (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1980), pp. 56-67.
54. Scott to Roche, 2 February 1916, NA, R. L. Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (A), p. 34334.
55. In Cherwinski's article, 'The Incredible Harvest Excursion of 1908', p. 59, footnote 9, he has incorrectly concluded that W. D. Scott, the federal civil servant and Walter Scott, Saskatchewan's premier, were brothers. According to Henry J. Morgan, Canadian Men and Women of the

Time, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), pp. 1005-6, the two men had completely different parents and there is no subsequent primary or secondary source which would indicate that they were remotely related.

56. Public Archives of Ontario (hereafter PAO), pamphlet file, no. 57 - 1915, Premier Walter Scott, 'Agricultural Population and Production', p. 4.

57. James Struthers, No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State 1914-1941 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 17; ibid., 'Prelude to Depression: The Federal Government and Unemployment, 1918-29', Canadian Historical Review, LVII, 3 (1977), pp. 277-293. For contemporary examples see the Commission of Conservation, 'Report of conference held at Winnipeg in conjunction with the second annual meeting of the Civic Improvement League of Canada, 28-30 May 1917', in Urban and Rural Development (Ottawa 1917), pp. 83-88.

58. CAR, 1916, p. 379; J. A. Corry, 'The Growth of Government Activities in Canada 1914-1921', Historical Papers (1940), pp. 63-73.

59. PAO, Prime Minister's Office, RG 3, William Hearst Papers, Box 16, 'Memorandum of Suggestions Adopted at Inter-Provincial Conference, Ottawa, October 1915: The Problem of Taking Care of and Providing Employment for Members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Who Return to Canada During the Period of the War'.

60. Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, p. 18; PAO, RG 3, Hearst Papers, Box 16, 'Memorandum of Suggestions'.

61. Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, p. 14.

62. Ibid., pp. 100-01.

63. Ibid., p. 8.

64. Quotation cited in Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, p. 101. Ernest Scammell, 'The Provision of Employment for Members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force on Their Return to Canada and the Re-Education of Those Who Are Unable to Follow Their Previous Occupations Because of Disability' (Ottawa 1916), p. 9. Also see Robert Rogers, 'Canada's Problems During and After the War', Addresses delivered before the Canadian Club of Montreal (1916-17), pp. 79-86; A. C. Flumerfelt, '"The Landless Man" and "The Manless Land" of Canada', ibid., pp. 179-83.

65. Pearson, pp. 151-57; T. B. Kidner, 'The Disabled Soldier', Addresses delivered before the Canadian Club of Montreal (1916-17), p. 115; Major J. L. Todd, 'Returned Soldiers and the Medical Profession', reprint from the Canadian Medical Association Journal, VII, 4 (April 1917), pp. 1-13; Desmond Morton, 'Noblest and Best: Retraining Canada's War Disabled, 1915-1923', Journal of Canadian Studies, XVI, 1 (1981-82), pp. 75-85. In a pamphlet released by the Canadian Military Hospitals Commission entitled, The Soldiers Return: From 'Down and Out' to 'Up and In Again': A Little Chat From Private Pat (Ottawa 1917), the fictional Private Pat relates a story of a one-legged soldier farmer who was as good as any healthy farmer; 'and I've seen a photo of a one-armed farmer pitching hay, no less!'

66. Scott to Roche, 2 February 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (A), p. 34334.

67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., p. 34335.
69. PRO, CO 532/78/50891, Duke of Connaught, Governor-General of Canada, to Bonar Law, 22 October 1915.
70. HLRO, Bonar Law Papers, BL/50/1/21, Milner to Bonar Law, 10 October 1915; John Grigg, Lloyd George from Peace to War 1912-1916 (London: Methuen Ltd., 1985), p. 270.
71. HLRO, Bonar Law Papers, BL 50/1/21, Milner to Bonar Law, 10 October 1915.
72. Ibid.; PRO, CO 532/82/34985, Milner to Bonar Law, 15 October 1915; Bonar Law to Borden, 15 October 1915.
73. Ontario Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers, XLVIII, part XIII, no. 55, Report of the Ontario Unemployment Commission, 1916.
74. PRO, CO 532/84/14032, minute by Macnaghten, 29 March 1916.
75. The Times, 4 March 1916.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. PRO, CO 532/84/14032, minute by Macnaghten, 29 March 1916.
79. Ibid.
80. RCSA, ELSC minutes, 21 December 1915; Royal Commonwealth Society, 'Sir Rider Haggard's Mission', Library Notes, new series, no. 190 (April 1973), p. 2.
81. Higgins, p. 49.
82. RCSA, ELSC, Smith to Wilson, 11 January 1916.
83. Ibid., Wilson to Smith, 12 January 1916.
84. Ibid., Smith to Wilson, 19 January 1916.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid., Wilson to Smith, 20 January 1916.
87. Ibid., Smith to Wilson, 22 January, 1916.
88. Smith to Cory, 12 January 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 171, f. RLB 130, pp. 93147-8.
89. Ibid., pp. 93146-8.
90. RCSA, ELSC, Wilson to Perley, 4 February 1916.

91. NA, Department of External Affairs, RG 25, G I, vol. 1186, f. 1225-16, Bonar Law to the Duke of Connaught, 7 February 1916; Haggard to Perley, 2 February 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 67, OC 312 (A), pp. 34336-7; Perley to Borden, 4 February 1916, ibid., p. 34338; Perley to Haggard, 4 February 1916, ibid., p. 34339.
92. RCSA, ELSC, Wilson to Haggard, 8 February 1916.
93. Ibid., Haggard to Wilson, 4 July 1916.
94. Daily Colonist (Victoria), 1 July 1916.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., 30 June 1916. R. B. Bennett, Conservative MP for Calgary, Loughheed's law partner and soon to be appointed the RCI's honorary Canadian representative, similarly informed Borden of the apolitical nature of Haggard's mission and message. Bennett to Borden, 15 July 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 181, f. RLB 406, p. 99067.
97. Vancouver World, 28 June 1916.
98. RCSA, ELSC, Wilson to Haggard, 30 March and 30 June 1916.
99. Ibid., Wilson to Haggard, 30 March 1916; 'Sir Rider Haggard's Mission', p. 4.
100. RCSA, ELSC, Wilson to Haggard, 4 May 1916.
101. Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, 14 July 1916.
102. Leader (Regina), 13 July 1916.
103. Schultz, p. 105.
104. RCSA, ELSC, Corbett to Wilson, 14 April 1916.
105. SAB, Walter Scott to Haggard, 13 July 1916, Walter Scott Papers, M1-IV-92 (4), p. 41381.
106. Glenbow-Alberta Archive (hereafter GAA), Canadian Pacific Railway, Advisory Committee Papers, Box 36, f. 431, J. S. Dennis, Assistant to the President of the CPR, to Haggard, 10 July 1916.
107. Ibid., Advisory Committee minutes, 8 July 1916, p. 16.
108. J. H. Sherrard to Borden, 8 March 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. 312 (A), pp. 34365-6.
109. Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, pp. 101-2.
110. CAR, 1916, p. 381.
111. Haggard to Borden, 20 July 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 181, f. RLB 406, p. 99071.
112. RCSA, ELSC, Haggard to Wilson, date unclear (July 1916).

113. Meighen to Borden, 21 July 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 181, f. RLB 406, p. 99072.
114. Ibid.
115. Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, p. 102.
116. RCSA, ELSC, Corbett to Wilson, 14 July 1916. The receptions were well attended by enthusiastic audiences. Corbett informed Wilson that all the meetings were wonderful and he gave Wilson an idea of their popularity in western Canada: Victoria, 500; Vancouver, 700; Edmonton, 1100; Calgary, 600; Regina, 180; Saskatoon, 700; Winnipeg, 800.
117. Desmond Morton, 'Sir William Otter and Internment Operations in Canada during the First World War', Canadian Historical Review, LV, 1 (March 1974), pp. 32-58.
118. Charles M. Johnston, E. C. Drury: Agrarian Idealist (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 166-7; Joseph Schull, Ontario Since 1867 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), pp. 228-9; CAR, 1916, p. 485.
119. PAO, RG 3, Hearst Papers, Box 16, memorandum entitled 'Land Settlement and Opportunities for Returned Soldiers in the Province of Ontario', 6 February 1917.
120. Ibid., Box 15, memorandum for the Ontario premier entitled, 'The Land Settlement Scheme for Returned Soldiers and Sailors', by H. M. Robins, Acting Deputy Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines, 5 November 1918, pp. 1-6.
121. Ibid., p. 3.
122. Thomas Adams, 'Returned Soldiers and Land Settlement', in Commission of Conservation, Rural Planning and Development (Ottawa 1917), pp. 207-9.
123. PAO, RG 3, Hearst Papers, Box 16, 'Land Settlement and Opportunities for Returned Soldiers in the Province of Ontario'.
124. PRO, CO 532/93/55672, Devonshire to Long, 25 October 1917. Devonshire was confident that northern Ontario was 'bound to have a great future both from its minerals and its agricultural opportunities'. Bodleian, Selborne Papers, Box 93, Devonshire to Selborne, 7 October 1917.
125. NA, Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 38, vol. 225, E. H. Scammell, Deputy Minister of the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment to J. B. Allen, Assistant Secretary of the Privy Council, 15 March 1918.
126. Borden to provincial premiers, 25 September 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (A), pp. 34399-407.
127. Acting Premier of Saskatchewan to Borden, 3 October 1916, ibid., pp. 34421-2.
128. PRO, CO 532/84/24495, New Brunswick, Statutes, 6, George V, Chapter 9, 'An Act to Provide for Settlements After the War'; George Clark, Premier of New Brunswick to Borden, 6 October 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (A), pp. 34423-26.

129. H. E. Brewster, Premier of British Columbia to Borden, 6 October 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (A), p. 34430.
130. Report of the British Columbia Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission, 29 November 1915 (1916), Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (B) (1); also available in CO 532/84/21594.
131. Brewster to Borden, 6 October 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (A), p. 34429. Sir Thomas White, Borden's Minister of Finance, agreed with Premier Brewster about the necessity of clearly defining Dominion-Provincial responsibility. Whereas Brewster was emphasising the Dominion government's role in undertaking the majority of the collective responsibility for soldier settlement, White argued the opposite. In his opinion, White thought it proper to indicate the federal government's intention with respect to soldier settlement on Crown land. However, before determining settlement policy with respect to other lands, such as Indian reserves, school lands and forest reserves, White advised it would be wise to learn what the provinces intended to do with the matter. 'It is reasonable that we should know their intentions in this respect', he warned Roche, 'before formulating our own policy in order that there may be no clashing or overlapping. If they say they propose to do nothing but leave the whole problem to the Dominion Government we can take our own course accordingly. If on the other hand they desire to do something then to that extent we shall be relieved'. W. T. White to Roche, 9 January 1917, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (B) (1), p. 34501.
132. Borden to the provincial premiers, 30 December 1916, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (A), p. 34448 and pp. 34450-6.
133. Memorandum, 8 January 1917, Borden Papers, vol. 67, f. OC 312 (B) (1), p. 34494; Statement of Proceedings of Conference given to the Press, 11 January 1917, ibid., vol. 67, f. OC 312 (A), pp. 34467-8.
134. Statement of Proceedings of Conference given to the Press, Borden Papers, pp. 34467-8; 'From War to Peace'; General Survey of Canada's Repatriation Plans (Ottawa: Repatriation Committee, c. 1919), p. 44.
135. WRO 947/609, Devonshire to Long, 12 January 1917; Long to Devonshire, 12 February 1917.
136. Statutes of Canada, 7-8, George V, Chapter 21.
137. Canada, Debates, 1917, II, p. 1162.
138. Ibid.; NA, Records of the Department of the Interior, RG 15, vol. 1127, f. 380452(1), memorandum by C. H. E. Powell, 22 February 1917.
139. Canada, Debates, 1917, II, pp. 1162-5.
140. CAR, 1917, p. 321; Canada, Debates, 1917, II, pp. 1157-66.
141. Canada, Debates, 1917, IV, p. 3619.
142. Canada, Debates, 1917, IV, p. 3620; Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, p. 103.
143. Canada, Debates, 1917, IV, p. 3618 and p. 3621.
144. NA, RG 15, vol. 1127, f. 380452(1), Powell to Hume, 22 February 1917.

145. Ibid. J. G. Turrif, a seasoned Saskatchewan homesteader and a Liberal MP, warned that soldiers unaccustomed to farming, whether they were from Canada or any other part of the empire, could not possibly be successful under the government's proposal. Experience not money, he argued, was the key to a successful policy and for the inexperienced he advocated a system of extensive agricultural education. Canada, Debates, 1917, IV, pp. 3779-80.

146. Canada, Debates, 1916, I, p. 910.

147. James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 49.

148. E. C. Morgan, 'Soldier Settlement in the Prairie Provinces', Saskatchewan History, XXI, 2 (Spring 1968), p. 41.

149. CAR, 1918, p. 588.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **CANADA: SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - A FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY**

The sudden ending of hostilities in November 1918 and the urgency of repatriating Canadian veterans quickly made it imperative that Ottawa formulate a broader soldier settlement strategy which eliminated the oversights inherent in the 1917 legislation. Determined to maintain strong and effective central leadership in reconstruction planning, federal policy makers were mindful that the new soldier settlement legislation could provide an important supplement to Canada's reactivated immigration and development strategy. However, the war had transformed Canadian society and Ottawa soon realised that it would have to take into account some of these new developments when redrafting pre-war policies or embarking upon new initiatives. This was particularly evident in the area of post-war immigration policy.

Prior to 1914 Canada's national immigration policy was based on an economic strategy designed to develop its primary resources. The emphasis on agriculture and the federal government's firm control over all aspects of immigration and colonisation ensured the pursuit of a consistent and vigorous economic development policy. However, the war had changed people's attitudes and perceptions towards a variety of ethnic groups. Patriotism and conformity to Anglo-Canadian orthodoxies had become fundamental conditions of acceptance within Canadian society. No longer were immigrants considered suitable simply because they were obedient, hard working and possessed the proper agricultural credentials. Participation in the war effort was the yardstick used by many Canadians to assess an immigrant's loyalty as was his willingness to adopt the Canadian way of life. Anything less branded him unfaithful and an enemy. Subsequently, previously welcomed ethnic groups, such as Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Finns and Ukrainians were either denied access to Canada or had severe landing regulations exacted upon them. The agriculturally industrious religious sects, notably Doukhobors, Hutterites and Mennonites, previously invited to settle on the prairies, were now judged incapable of 'Canadianisation' and excluded. Although social compatibility and the willingness to adopt the Canadian way of



life increased in importance they did not supplant the need to attract a skilled work force as the main criteria behind immigration policy in the immediate post-war years. As Canada's immigration policy became more restrictive, its architects nevertheless maintained that with a return to normality Canada would secure sufficient numbers of agricultural and industrial workers either domestically or from the preferred nations of the United States and Britain.<sup>1</sup>

The optimistic assumption that British immigration would return to the pre-war levels was quickly dispelled. And with it went the expectations of achieving a culturally homogeneous society rooted in the institutions of an Anglo-Saxon heritage. The campaign to reinforce Canada's Anglo-Saxon character through a selective immigration policy was a potent, ideological weapon in certain sectors of Canadian society. Nativist sentiment, fuelled by racial prejudice ran high, particularly in western Canada where many Anglo-Canadian trade unionists and farmers had developed a hostile attitude towards 'alien' immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Anxieties and emotions intensified upon news of the Russian revolution in 1917 and during the increasingly turbulent, sometimes violent, labour unrest between 1917 and 1919. Veterans joined forces with trade unionists, farmers and various nativist associations to combat the largely imaginary threat from within. In many cases veterans spearheaded anti-alien agitation, and by 1918 one association, the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA) had eagerly accepted national leadership on the alien question.<sup>3</sup>

#### SECTION 4: VETERAN MILITANCY AND THE 'ALIEN' QUESTION

'Among the most important [national issues] are the settlement of our agricultural lands and the pressing problem of the alien population of Canada', proclaimed Dr. A. M. Forbes, vice-president of the GWVA.<sup>4</sup> Forbes argued that a policy of agricultural reconstruction based upon the resettlement of returning veterans would do more to stabilise Canadian society than any other reconstruction policy. Agriculture, he stated, was more important to the future well-being of the nation than manufacturing. The only way to stop social erosion was to make the countryside, rather than the city, a more attractive place to live for native-born Canadians. 'No nation can be regarded as unhealthy when a virile peasantry, contented with rural employments...exists on its

soil'.<sup>5</sup>

Underlying Forbes's argument was the stark realisation that Canada's urban population was expanding. The 1921 census revealed that fractionally more Canadians lived in the cities than in rural areas. While agricultural employment had increased in the four western provinces between 1911 and 1921, and was the largest employer in every province except British Columbia, the industry suffered a small overall decline in the number of men it employed nationally because of falling statistics in eastern provinces.<sup>6</sup> Urbanisation inexorably increased and during the 1920s most rural Canadians grudgingly accepted the fact.

Nevertheless, the farmer as the ideal Canadian citizen remained a powerful myth in post-war Canadian society. Land was the element which best exemplified social stability, and the sturdy yeoman farmer symbolised progress, development and a robust society. The appeal of, even reverence for, the past and its ancient traditions, was another important element in this conservative ideology. The basic components of class harmony, social stability and tradition were common to both Canadian and British agrarian myths. But unlike British conservatism's romanticisation of country life, Canadians did not necessarily equate the agrarian myth with the 'nonindustrial, noninnovative and nonmaterial qualities' inherent in the British 'countryside of the mind'.<sup>7</sup> As in the United States, the Canadian yeoman's purpose was 'to strengthen the fibre of [the] country by building into the basic industrial structure...the best blood and bones of [the] nation'.<sup>8</sup> But the basic issue remained social stability rather than modernisation.

Arthur Meighen illustrated the point when he introduced the Soldier Settlement Act of 1919. The primary purpose of the legislation was to secure settlers for the development of vacant prairie farm land,

and to make settlers of those who have proven themselves the backbone of the nation in its trouble. We believe that we cannot better fortify this country against the waves of unrest and discontent that now assail us...than by making the greatest possible proportion of the soldiers of our country settlers upon our land.<sup>9</sup>

The veterans proved to be willing defenders of the existing order for several reasons. As more soldiers returned from the trenches in 1918 the membership and organisation of the veterans' associations grew stronger and became more aggressive in their demands.<sup>10</sup> Many became disgruntled soon after their homecoming by the lack of speed and

adequate resources for their return to civilian life. Disappointment turned to anger as some veterans discovered that jobs they had vacated had been filled by people they considered to be aliens. Hardened by their war experience and conditioned by a 'friend or foe' attitude, veterans usually identified the alien immigrant with the enemy they had recently fought against in Europe. With the advent of Bolshevism it was easy to transfer their animosity for the enemy alien to Russian and East European immigrants.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, one of the GWVA's primary objectives was 'to inculcate loyalty to Canada and the Empire'.<sup>12</sup> The preservation of freedom, democracy and Christianity had been the principal ideological basis for going to war and for the veterans these values were the very essence of the British empire. But the ideology contained a darker, more sinister element. As one historian points out, the expression of these British principles revealed an intolerant, sometimes jingoistic and 'militant Anglo-Saxon superiority', symbolised by the Union Jack, the English language and the Royal Navy.<sup>13</sup>

As veteran militancy grew in 1918 the Canadian cabinet was bombarded with a steady barrage of anti-alien resolutions from the GWVA.<sup>14</sup> In March, the GWVA presented a petition to Prime Minister Borden urging that enemy aliens should bear their share of the war effort and requesting that they be employed in essential war work under appropriate surveillance. Earnings above the amount equal to the pay of a Canadian soldier would be expropriated by the government for the war effort. No aliens would be allowed to hold public office or possess firearms. All enemy alien newspapers should be suppressed and the use of alien languages in the schools and pulpit strictly forbidden.<sup>15</sup> The launching of Germany's spring offensive later that month placed greater, more militant demands by veterans on the authorities to curb the alien threat and for stricter immigration machinery after the war. Quality not quantity was what Canada needed according to the GWVA. The only immigrants suitable, aside from the white races within the British empire, were from the United States and northern and western Europe exclusive of enemy belligerents. In December, the Edmonton branch called on the federal government 'to prohibit the enemy alien from entering the Dominion of Canada [and] to confiscate all land properties [sic], invested capital and monies of such unnaturalised, and naturalised enemy aliens, excepting those who joined the C.E.F.' and their immediate families.<sup>16</sup> Despite the fractional nature of intra-veteran association politics, the GWVA received unanimous support from

rival veterans' organisations on the immigration issue and the alien question.<sup>17</sup>

Land settlement had been a major plank in the GWVA's platform since its foundation in 1917 and became a serious bone of contention between the association and the federal government. Between 1917 and 1919 the GWVA had attempted to cajole the federal government into allowing it an equal share in the supervision of its soldier settlement policy. Pleased with the introduction of soldier settlement legislation in 1917 it believed that its participation in the parliamentary investigation initiated that year had been important in spurring on the federal government. But its enthusiasm soured when the government quietly shelved soldier settlement to face the nationally divisive issues of conscription and railway subsidisation in 1917-18. It was not until January 1918, after Borden's electoral victory, that the government picked up the thread of soldier settlement once again. But it was almost too late to implement a serious settlement scheme for the upcoming year. This prompted the GWVA at its second annual convention in Toronto in August 1918, to urge the federal government to expand its settlement scheme and to appoint a cabinet minister whose sole responsibility would be the formulation and supervision of the scheme, and to convene a special conference between the federal and provincial governments and the GWVA in order to draft a more suitable policy.<sup>18</sup>

The government flatly refused such a partnership. The announcement of the three-man Soldier Settlement Board, which would administer Canada's soldier settlement scheme, was finally made in January 1918. It did little to restore the GWVA's confidence in the federal government since two of the three seemed unqualified or unsuitable. F. W. Law, the GWVA's branch secretary in Winnipeg, vigorously protested against Charles Roland's appointment. Roland was a native of Winnipeg, a former commissioner of the Winnipeg Industrial Bureau, former secretary of the unpopular Winnipeg Patriotic Fund, manager of the Winnipeg Telegram and, claimed the Veteran, a notorious civic booster. A highly dubious choice, according to the magazine's editors, and one that reeked of political patronage. The real hostility, however, occurred over Major E. J. Ashton's appointment. Although a CEF veteran, Ashton's real expertise, according to the Veteran, was not in veterans' administration but as a furniture dealer and undertaker in Regina. The GWVA was greatly angered because the government had not approached the association and sought its advice on

possible candidates. It therefore vented its displeasure: 'Perhaps the Government is a government of farseeing prevision and fears that the scheme of settlement on outlying homesteads...may bring veterans to untimely graves and is providing for their skilful internment'.<sup>19</sup> Its own exclusion apart, it could find little fault with the acting chairman and former Superintendent of Lands for British Columbia, Samuel Maber.

Ever since 1917 the GWVA had attempted to get one of its members appointed as a member of the three-man board. It had nominated Captain Ivan Finn of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan as its representative in response to a suggestion by Roche, the Minister of the Interior, in which he promised to make a recommendation to the cabinet that the GWVA be allowed to nominate a representative to the SSB.<sup>20</sup> Finn was a member of the GWVA's land committee and had actively campaigned against the 'foreign farmer' in western Canada at the GWVA's inaugural conference in April 1917.<sup>21</sup> But when he was not selected the association cried betrayal and stated that 'strangers are given jurisdiction in those departments of the Government where our affairs of greatest importance are administered, and we are not even consulted'.<sup>22</sup> Roche's support for the idea made no headway with his cabinet colleagues. Besides, when the issue was raised in October 1917, Borden was preoccupied with assembling his Unionist government to fight the forthcoming general election. Soldier settlement and GWVA representation on the SSB were minor problems for the federal government compared to the conscription crisis which threatened to split the country. Roche, for his part, now retired to the tranquil pastures of the Civil Service Commission.

#### SECTION 4.1: THE SOLDIER SETTLEMENT ACT OF 1919

The formation of the Union government in October 1917 heralded the entry of the austere Arthur Meighen into the Department of the Interior. First elected to Parliament in 1908 as MP for the Manitoba constituency of Portage la Prairie, Meighen, a lawyer by profession, established a reputation as an astute and masterful debater. In 1913 he became Solicitor-General, at that time not a cabinet position. Borden had always been impressed with Meighen's intellectual and managerial abilities and after the outbreak of war Meighen found himself undertaking greater administrative and party responsibilities outside

the scope of his office. The Prime Minister increasingly relied on him to pilot controversial legislation through the House. Though not one to complain about the hard work, he did want a cabinet position which acknowledged his achievements and status in the government. As a precondition to agreeing to a wartime coalition government, Meighen insisted that he be given the Interior portfolio, which signified western party leadership.<sup>23</sup>

Meighen concurred with his predecessor on the urgency of immediately selecting SSB personnel. The delay had been due to the tremendous difficulty of finding capable men 'for this most perplexing and indeed stupendous work'. At the same time, he could not ignore the pressure from the western premiers who were demanding immediate action in time for spring seeding.<sup>24</sup>

Maber realised immediately that Roche's legislation was wholly inadequate and he urged Meighen to reserve all Dominion lands within fifteen miles of the railway. He also knew that there was a scarcity of good arable land close to existing rail networks on the prairies. The probability of a large number of soldiers applying to the SSB therefore necessitated the reservation of a better class of land.<sup>25</sup> But it was not enough. Maber pointed out that the bulk of the available homestead land along existing railways was in northern Saskatchewan and north-western Alberta. Many surveyed townships in the Peace River district of north-western Alberta still remained isolated and without rail communications. The only lands suitable for soldier settlers elsewhere on the prairies were claims cancelled through default, abandoned homesteads or expropriated reserve land. These lands were scattered throughout the region, but Maber was confident that it contained a number of good homesteads.<sup>26</sup> In April 1918, Meighen reacted to Maber's entreaties and reserved all remaining vacant Dominion land within fifteen miles of the railway.

Slowly, portions of school lands, Indian reserve lands, grazing leases, Hudson's Bay Company and forest reserves were set aside exclusively for returned soldiers.<sup>27</sup> The GWVA exerted constant pressure on the government to expand its soldier settlement programme. In May the British Columbia chapter hastened the utilisation of Indian reserves for returned soldiers in exchange for grazing leases. Saskatchewan veterans complained that progress was unsatisfactory.<sup>28</sup> Once again, veteran nativism reared its ugly head when demands were made to expropriate the homesteads of 'enemy aliens' such as Mennonites and

Doukhobors. Similarly, land locked up by the speculators and corporations did not escape the veterans' demand for expropriation either.<sup>29</sup> Condemning the soldier settler legislation of 1917 as inadequate, they charged the federal government with 'merely tinkering with a vast question'.<sup>30</sup>

A flurry of activity engulfed the Department of the Interior and the SSB in 1918. Between April and July a new set of land regulations was formulated and Dominion land agents were notified of the new procedures and priorities.<sup>31</sup> Throughout July a series of orders-in-council was implemented reserving a variety of Dominion lands. This included the forty mile wide railway belt in British Columbia, remaining Doukhobor reserves and unsurveyed lands in the Peace River and Vermillion districts of Alberta. Maber was particularly anxious to secure the reservation of these unsurveyed lands as it had been reported that squatters were moving into the districts. He recommended that squatting by civilians before a survey was carried out should be prohibited.<sup>32</sup>

Indian reserves were singled out by the GWVA as a promising solution to the land shortage. Numerous branches across the prairies agreed that the Indians were not making full use of these lands and that they should be purchased from the Indian bands at a fair and equitable price.<sup>33</sup> At first, the federal government balked at the idea. But when it became clear that there was a chronic land shortage the proposal attracted serious attention. Meighen was particularly anxious to secure these lands and he implored D. C. Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, that it was of the utmost importance for the success of soldier settlement to do so.<sup>34</sup> Scott was sympathetic and wanted to cooperate, but he stressed that his Department's first duty was to the welfare of the Indian. He reminded Meighen that land could not be legally taken without the Indians agreeing to a surrender. Once a fair valuation was agreed upon the surrendered land would be administered by the SSB. As custodian of the Indian lands he wanted to ensure that the department 'are getting fair prices for the Indians'. He also worried about the danger that the SSB might obtain the most desirable land, leaving the Indians with poorer sections. He therefore strongly advised that the government be prepared to take the land en bloc.<sup>35</sup>

It was clear that a revitalised soldier settlement policy would need provincial participation. John Oliver, the Premier of British Columbia, had recognised the need for such input as it emerged that the

number of applicants would far outstrip the insufficient amount of suitable Dominion land available. Oliver implored Borden to call a national conference to discuss amendments to the 1917 Act. The Prime Minister complied and on 19 November 1918 a post-war conference convened in Ottawa to discuss land settlement, immigration and agriculture. High on the agenda were land reclamation, land expropriation and a comprehensive agricultural training and education programme for soldier settlers.<sup>36</sup>

J. A. Calder, one of the three Liberals in the coalition cabinet, warmly endorsed Oliver's initiative. Since his appointment as minister of the new Department of Immigration and Colonisation, post-war immigration and land settlement had received his undivided attention. Calder was a shrewd Saskatchewan Liberal who was just beginning to make his name in federal politics. The Conservative party hierarchy distrusted him and thought him a 'slick and unscrupulous partisan'.<sup>37</sup> But according to the Canadian Annual Review he was the chief representative of western thought in Ottawa.<sup>38</sup> In September 1918 he toured the prairies where he announced to a reporter of the Winnipeg Free Press, western Canada's leading newspaper, that the federal government had drafted a broad policy regarding immigration and land settlement in which it recognised the need for 'full and direct co-operation with the Provinces. It involves the settlement of privately-owned lands, abandoned farms, and leased farms, and the employment of Provincial and Federal credit'.<sup>39</sup> He elaborated upon this pronouncement during the federal-provincial conference in Ottawa, standing in for Meighen. He agreed with Oliver that the re-establishment of war veterans provided an excellent opportunity to develop the nation's resources. 'The economic situation demands that all our resources must now be utilised', and this unquestionably meant bringing vacant and under-developed prairie land into immediate use. 'This matter affects all Governments, Federal, Provincial and Municipal and the Returned Soldier problem must be hooked up to the general question of speeding up production...particularly food production'.<sup>40</sup>

Calder was under no illusion that to bring millions of acres of wilderness under cultivation would require heavy investment. The creation of a large number of small holders who might one day purchase their own farm was believed to be money well spent, but nothing would be achieved using parsimonious half measures. It also meant that the feuding between the provinces and Ottawa would have to cease. The



premiers agreed, promised their support and acknowledged that settling returned soldiers was a federal responsibility.<sup>41</sup> Calder's announcement of the government's broad intentions had paved the way for Meighen to formulate new legislation.

The 1917 Act had restricted the soldiers' choice to Dominion land in western Canada. Provinces, such as Nova Scotia were outside the original scope of the 1917 Act and had to provide their own schemes. However, very little Crown land remained in Nova Scotia and what was left was isolated, costly and heavily forested making it extremely expensive to clear. Now that soldiers could purchase farms and pre-empt vacant and abandoned homesteads outside the prairie provinces, Canada's soldier settlement policy became truly national. Although most of the enquiries came from veterans from the three prairie provinces, and the majority of the vacant land was in this region, the maritime provinces and Quebec were eager to help their returning heroes within the limited resources available.<sup>42</sup>

Meighen sketched out his plans to Borden on 11 December 1918. With a few minor adjustments over the winter it became the framework of the government's policy. In May 1919 Meighen introduced the new legislation which contained a number of changes to make the scheme more attractive and induce more men to settle.<sup>43</sup> All vacant Dominion lands within a fifteen mile radius of a railway in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the railway belt of British Columbia were reserved for soldier settlement. The SSB was instructed to focus its attention on lands held vacant by land speculators and was authorised to designate these lands as settlement areas. The Soldier Settlement Act of 1919 empowered the Board to purchase these lands at a price set by the Exchequer Court should the speculator refuse the Board's offer. The new Act extended the Board's power to expropriate land from forest reserves and acquire uncultivated Indian reserves and school lands.<sup>44</sup> More importantly, it allowed veterans the freedom to choose and purchase privately owned land with government assistance which by its location and fertility was preferable to Crown land in the area.

The chief provision of the new Act, however, was a larger, more generous credit programme. The classes of assistance provided under the Act were as follows:

1. To aid in settlement on lands purchased through the Board.

- (a) Up to \$4500 for the purchase of land,
- (b) Up to \$2000 for the purchase of livestock, implements, and other equipment,
- (c) Up to \$1000 for the erection of buildings and other improvements.

2. To aid in becoming re-established on land already owned by them.

- (a) Up to \$3500 for the removal of encumbrances, the payment so advanced not to exceed fifty per cent of the appraised value of the land,
- (b) Up to \$2000 for the purchase of livestock, implements, and other equipment,
- (c) Up to \$1000 for the erection of buildings or other permanent improvements.

3. To aid in becoming established on Dominion Lands in the prairie provinces.

- (a) Up to \$3000 for the purchase of livestock and equipment, and the erection of permanent improvements.<sup>45</sup>

Interest was set at 5% per annum, but loan charges for stock and equipment did not begin until the third year and were payable in four annual instalments, while loans for land and buildings were repayable in twenty-five annual instalments. As with land selection soldier settlers under the new scheme were given the option of making their own offer when purchasing implements and livestock. Before any purchase was made, however, the SSB required an appraisal from its own officials to ensure the proper expenditure of public money. According to the federal government, by the end of 1920 the new purchasing procedure had saved the Canadian public over \$3.6 million.<sup>46</sup> Eligibility was limited to those Canadian veterans who had served overseas with the CEF and those domiciled in Canada before the war who had seen action with Imperial or Allied forces. Full benefit was extended to ex-servicemen from the British Isles and the self-governing or 'white' Dominions.

The SSB took additional measures to protect its investment by providing preliminary agricultural training facilities and expert supervision. The emphasis on proper selection, training and supervision reflected Ottawa's determination to remain in complete control of its soldier settlement policy. Its efforts to establish training facilities before demobilisation, both in England and Canada, reflected the urgency with which Meighen regarded soldier settlement as a vital component of Canadian post-war reconstruction. Meighen informed Sir Edward Kemp, Minister of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada (OMFC), that

negotiations were under way in Canada for the use of agricultural facilities and institutions. It was to be a coordinated effort between the SSB and the federal and provincial Departments of Agriculture. Inexperienced applicants would receive training at the various provincial agricultural colleges and schools of agriculture. Successful private farmers would also be canvassed and selected to participate in an apprenticeship programme.<sup>47</sup> However, very special opportunities existed in Britain during demobilisation. It was estimated that demobilisation would take from nine to eighteen months. Therefore, while waiting for passage home training facilities could be established for practical instruction in Canadian farming techniques and land settlement under the auspices of the Khaki University in Britain.<sup>48</sup>

Meighen urged that the military authorities should cooperate by providing training farms, horses, equipment and qualified instructors. SSB officials stressed the need for brief, three-month courses which concentrated on the practical rather than the academic or scientific. Candidates were to familiarise themselves with the daily routine of farm life before being sent to farmers who would provide additional practical ground work and experience.<sup>49</sup> Preliminary meetings had already taken place between the SSB and the Ministry of Militia's Demobilisation Committee for the prompt implementation of the arrangements for agricultural instruction. In December 1918, Commissioner Ashton and C. F. Bailey, Ontario's Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Agriculture, were despatched to London to survey Canadian troops on the question of land settlement and the need for training facilities in agriculture.<sup>50</sup> A census undertaken in early 1918 confirmed that 105,000 Canadian soldiers out of a total of 400,000 men overseas had expressed a wish to settle on the land after the war. These figures were later revised by Meighen who reported that on the basis of 273,444 replies from members of the CEF, 87,771 had expressed an interest in farming and stock raising.<sup>51</sup>

Experience, training and temperament were not the only criteria for a successful soldier settler. Capital was essential and the SSB was favourably inclined to put a minimum capital requirement of \$500 on any candidate accepted for land settlement. When the 1919 legislation was announced Canadian veterans were entitled to make a down payment of 10% on the purchase price of land, stock and seed. Imperial ex-servicemen were required to pay 20% of the amount paid for their land, stock and seed and were to spend sufficient time on Canadian farms to acquaint

themselves with Canadian farming methods.<sup>52</sup> For those ex-Imperials who had farming experience, one year with a Canadian farmer was deemed sufficient while for inexperienced ex-Imperials the minimum was two years.

Meighen defended the new measures in the House of Commons by stating that they were not a gratuity or reward for the soldier. The legislation provided the foundation for a systematic approach to the colonisation of new territory. 'The primary and great principle of this Bill is to secure settlers on the lands of this country', he announced,

[The] class of citizen that counts the most in the determination of the stability of a country...is undoubtedly the basic class---the agricultural class...Its purpose is to strengthen the fibre of this country by building into the basic industrial structure of the best blood and bones of our nation.<sup>53</sup>

Meighen never tired of stressing the national scope of the land settlement issue. It was an enormous task requiring cooperation between all levels of government. Participation of private individuals such as well-trained agricultural experts, experienced and capable farmers and financial officers from banks and mortgage companies was also essential. Regional qualification and advisory boards sprouted up all over the country staffed largely by local farmers, instructors from provincial agricultural colleges and public servants from provincial Departments of Agriculture who were familiar with local land prices, soils and farming practices. The SSB bureaucracy mushroomed to meet the increasing pressure from applicants who needed land appraisals, loan estimates, supervision, advice and information. The watershed of the SSB was reached in June 1920 when staff numbers rose from a few hundred to a peak of 1,579. In 1923 Ashton reported that the supervisory staff alone consisted of 150 trained agriculturists, all practical men, many of whom possessed degrees from agricultural colleges. By the end of November 1924 reorganisation had reduced the staff to 600 and by 1930 some 500 remained employed.<sup>54</sup>

The new legislation had an immediate impact on the number of applications handled by the SSB. In March 1919 only 400 were received. Between May and July the average was 400 per week and by August it was 600.<sup>55</sup> In its first annual report published in March 1921, the SSB proudly announced that during 1919 approximately 75% of the applicants were granted qualification certificates while in 1920 just under two-

thirds were successful. The aggregate number of soldier settlers was 25,443 of which 19,771 or 77% received loans to purchase farms privately. Loans amounted to over \$80 million.<sup>56</sup> The acreage and livestock statistics were even more impressive. The SSB held clear title to over 2.1 million acres of land, 360,000 acres on mortgage and first charge on over 980,000 acres for a grand total of 3.49 million acres. Of this, over 765,000 acres had been acquired from various forest reserves, grazing leases, Indian lands, Hudson's Bay reserve lands, Doukhobor reserves and school lands on the prairies. The SSB had liens on 119,000 horses, cattle, sheep and swine, as well as numerous pieces of farm machinery. Statistically, it was an impressive picture. Even more encouraging was the fact that 10% of the loans had been repaid.<sup>57</sup>

Despite Meighen's insistence that soldier settlement was not a 'big loan venture', but a practical scheme based on sound business principles, the Canadian Annual Review called Canada's soldier settlement programme 'the largest real estate and loan business in Canada if not in the British Empire'.<sup>58</sup> Prime farm land in 1919 was not cheap. In the prairie provinces it was selling for between \$50 and \$60 an acre. Elsewhere it was considerably cheaper, averaging between \$16 an acre in New Brunswick, \$33 in Ontario and \$53 in British Columbia. However, for those veterans who did not claim Dominion land but purchased privately owned land their price per acre was considerably higher. And it was land purchasing which comprised over half the loan money spent by soldier settlers.<sup>59</sup>

For the immediate future soldier settlement proved to be a notable success. The SSB was convinced that the 1919 Act had an appreciable effect in stemming rural depopulation and making an important contribution to the back-to-the-land movement. The achievement of settling over 25,000 soldiers with their families had added more than 100,000 people to Canada's permanent agricultural population. This was indeed of national significance, reported the SSB, because if the scheme had not been launched 'a great proportion of them would be found in the crowded centres of population, increasing the difficulty of the problems of unemployment'.<sup>60</sup> The SSB's production figures for soldier settlers were indicative of the importance of the soldier settler to Canadian agriculture. Over \$10 million of livestock had been purchased by the SSB for its clients who in turn had produced, in a very short space of time, 2.6 million bushels of wheat and 6.5 million bushels of oats, and

other grains, feed and fodder valued at \$13.9 million.<sup>61</sup> Even more impressive was the number of virgin acres brought under cultivation. Of the 4.8 million acres occupied by soldier settlers, 2.1 million was raw Dominion land lying in the prairie provinces. The number of soldier grants issued in this settlement area by March 1921 was 8,772 with each farm averaging 240 acres. Of this untamed land the SSB estimated that 194,000 acres or 9.2% had been broken by 1920 and it was believed that in 1921 an additional 300,000 acres or 14.2% would be tamed for the first time. Indeed, the SSB was encouraged by these figures because 928,000 acres of soldier settlement land had been brought under cultivation nationwide by 1921.<sup>62</sup>

However by 1920 soldier settlers were already confronting serious problems. The initial rush of applicants made it impossible to screen all undesirable and unsuitable applicants and resulted in the inevitable approval of a higher number of these cases than was normal under ordinary circumstances. The liberal monetary provisions, which Meighen had taken great pains to deny as constituting a military gratuity or 'big loan venture', were exactly that. 'The very nature of the scheme itself', admitted Commissioner Ashton, 'involved the waiving in many ways of ordinary business margins of security'.<sup>63</sup> The most significant blow to the entire scheme was the sharp and sudden post-war deflation which began in 1920. The lion's share of settlement took place in 1919 and 1920 when the prices of land, stock and equipment were at a premium. However, by the time the majority of soldier settlers had brought enough acres under cultivation or had built up their herds, prices for agricultural products had plummeted. The SSB was the first to admit the surprising results of 1920. 'Considering the collapse of markets in the middle of threshing, it is felt that the showing is a remarkably good one'.<sup>64</sup> The cost-price squeeze ushered in a period of failure, foreclosure, abandonment and indebtedness which haunted soldier settlers and politicians alike throughout the inter-war period.<sup>65</sup>

#### SECTION 4.2: PROVINCIAL SETBACKS

The Kapuskasing soldier colony was the first provincial scheme to be abandoned in 1920. E. C. Drury, former secretary of the Canadian Council of Agriculture and the first President of the United Farmers of Ontario, replaced Premier Hearst and his provincial Conservative

government in 1919 at the head of a farmer-labour coalition. The needs of northern Ontario had figured prominently in the election and Drury promised to formulate a more prudent economic development policy based on sound management rather than sheer exploitation. His primary objective was Kapuskasing which had been an extremely precarious operation right from the start.<sup>66</sup> It had been founded as Ontario's answer to the national back-to-the-land movement, and although a most commendable social experiment, it quickly foundered on inept planning, misguided assumptions and an inadequate settler selection procedure. In short, it was a tragedy which Drury and a provincial commission of enquiry sought to remedy quickly.<sup>67</sup>

Kapuskasing had not proved popular with the veterans. A total of 131 soldier colonists had tried their luck in the colony of which only twenty remained in September 1920.<sup>68</sup> When a British delegation from the Overseas Settlement Committee (OSC), the Imperial government's migration authority established in January 1919, travelled to the area six years later the Earl of Clarendon, chairman of the OSC and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, recorded that people, principally French Canadians, lived in the 'most primitive pioneering conditions'. Their chief source of income was made not from agriculture but from the sale of timber which was cleared off the farm land. Clarendon astutely observed that only 'experienced bushmen with farming experience' could make a living from such a densely wooded region.<sup>69</sup> Very few of the soldier settlers had any pioneer qualifications at all therefore abandonment and disappointment was high.

The same depressing results plagued British Columbia's soldier settlement plans. Speculators had secured most of the suitable agricultural land. However, the expected rush of British Columbia soldier settlers never materialised. By 1921 a mere 319 native-born British Columbians had participated in the provincial scheme and by 1922 interest was declining. A paltry fifty-three provincial soldier settlers had taken advantage of the \$500 rebate on the purchase price of land selected by them out of the available 19,156 acres.<sup>70</sup> The provincial government tried to hide its disappointment by stating that the soldier settlers in these scattered and remote areas 'were showing a determination to make good, and that...progress towards permanent settlement had been made'.<sup>71</sup> But British Columbia too had failed to attract substantial numbers of soldier settlers to areas which were isolated, marginally productive, expensive to clear and lacked large

established markets which would facilitate product diversification.<sup>72</sup>

#### SECTION 4.3: PROBLEMS ON THE PRAIRIES

The federal government was keen to avoid the glaring mistakes witnessed in Ontario and British Columbia. Reclamation of swamp and timber land, a task which British Columbian authorities wanted the federal government to assume, was considered outside its jurisdiction by Ottawa. The chief element of successful settlement was to settle people on land which was ready to farm close to transportation facilities and markets. Lands which offered the greatest chance of overall success were those suited for mixed farming. 'Skillful farmers who believed that they allowed for every contingency have often failed in their enterprise by over specialisation', exclaimed the SSB.<sup>73</sup> The direction towards mixed farming was not impulsive, it argued, but was calculated on sound economic principles.

Cory, in 1914, had considered it imperative for the government to make changes to its land policy because of falling homestead entries. The traditional areas of settlement along the older railway lines were filling up and the largest tracts of available arable land were concentrated on the northern fringe or park belt of the prairie provinces. It was this area, recommended Cory, where the federal government should concentrate its settlement efforts. Each prairie province had its own specific forest fringe region targeted for mixed farming by the SSB. In Alberta the enormous Peace River district several hundred miles north-west of Edmonton was reserved for soldier settlement. Land expropriated from the Porcupine Forest Reserve in north-eastern Saskatchewan was designated as a soldier settler reserve and the Carraganna district in north central Saskatchewan near Prince Albert was believed to have tremendous potential as well. Manitoba had much less park belt to offer and what was available was concentrated in the inter-lake region between Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba or was chiselled from the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve and the Turtle Mountain Forest Reserve in the western and south-western parts of the province.

The basic problem concerning soldier settlement in the park belt was that government officials were over-optimistic in their appraisal of the region's immediate agricultural potential. The land was generally



productive but it was heavily forested and demanded clearing, draining and breaking. Transportation facilities were either lacking or poorly developed.<sup>74</sup> The SSB was emphatic that it did 'not contemplate the settlement of soldiers as pioneers in remote locations or under isolated conditions, removed from markets, in virgin forest lands, or on lands not cultivable without reclamation or other development'. In October 1919, Maber reiterated this point to a special Parliamentary committee which was examining veterans' affairs. But it was blatantly clear well before the publication of the SSB's first report in March 1921 that the federal government had indeed failed to meet its own criteria in certain regions. The very nature of its expansion of homestead lands through the acquisition of Indian lands, school reserves, grazing leases, Hudson's Bay reserve lands and the withdrawal of land from forest reserves, the majority of which was concentrated in the park belt, made soldier settlement in these isolated and sometimes inaccessible northern areas nothing but heartbreaking.<sup>75</sup>

Speculation and squatting in the Peace River district had made it crucial for the federal government to reserve what was left of the homesteading land within fifteen miles of the railway in this newly surveyed northern region.<sup>76</sup> According to E. J. Lyne, a Liberal member of the Alberta Legislative Assembly and party secretary for the provincial Liberals in Grand Prairie located in the heart of the Peace River country, what frustrated soldier settlers most was the lack of transportation facilities. He bitterly complained to William Lyon Mackenzie King, the newly elected leader of the national Liberals, that settlers who were urged by the federal government to settle in this vast northern territory had a right to adequate rail facilities. Despite the federal government's promises the soldier settlers had been constantly denied proper rail and road transportation. In several proposed sites for soldier settlers the minimum distance from the railhead was eighty miles! Lyne hoped Mackenzie King would 'visit...this Northern Empire [which] would bring home to you the vastness of our undeveloped resources and enable you [to] better...legislate for their early development'.<sup>77</sup>

Manitoba possessed some of the most marginal settlement territory under SSB supervision.<sup>78</sup> The inter-lake district sandwiched between Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba had been singled out by the SSB as a promising development area. Land north of Dauphin located in the park belt and to the west of Lake Manitoba was another site. Further north

was another area deemed suitable near the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border at Swan River. The SSB had also been looking into the feasibility of slicing forest reserve land from the Riding and Turtle Mountain reserves, and under pressure from the Manitoba executive of the GWVA, a few hundred acres were carved off from each forest reserve.<sup>79</sup> Generally speaking, the majority of this reserved land was heavily forested and stony, particularly in the inter-lake region. Although it was reported that the soil was productive the enormous amounts of time, energy and money required to bring the land under cultivation proved too much for some.

Even for those who overcame these obstacles, natural calamities such as frequent and early frosts, hail, flooding and drought wiped out even the best and most determined soldier settlers.<sup>80</sup> One desperate Canadian soldier settler in the inter-lake region near Ashern reported that his one workable well was frozen and in order to water his animals he had to melt snow in the house. He had drilled four wells during the summer and had struck solid rock at depths varying from four to twelve feet. Worse yet, while drilling he was forced to take his livestock two miles every day to water. Four of his soldier settler neighbours had suffered a similar fate and were talking of pulling out if the government did not send proper drilling equipment. Despite the hardship and complications, there were many private individuals keen to sell land to returning veterans in fertile southern Manitoba.<sup>81</sup>

Although Alberta claimed the largest share of Canada's soldier settlers, it was in Saskatchewan, the second highest benefactor, that soldier settlement was pursued with the greatest determination. Very early on the Saskatchewan branch of the Military Hospital Commission had advocated the preparation of machinery to give returning veterans an opportunity to engage in farming after the war.<sup>82</sup> The Saskatchewan Returned Soldiers Employment Commission, the provincial agency responsible for securing employment and generally assisting returning veterans, was one of the more active and conscientious provincial soldiers' aid commissions in Canada. It too advocated the need for immediate and adequate preparation for returning soldiers before demobilisation. And it argued that the re-establishment and rehabilitation of Canada's citizen soldiers was a national obligation. The Commission insisted that this obligation could only be met by inter-provincial cooperation coordinated by the federal government.<sup>83</sup>

Land settlement provided an integral part of the Saskatchewan

government's commitment to the returned soldier. Agriculture was the life blood of the prairie economy and in Saskatchewan farming was more important to the provincial economy than in Manitoba and Alberta who were able to exploit other natural resources. Because Saskatchewan had the most arable land of the three prairie provinces it had more at stake in a successful land settlement policy. More settlers ensured a healthy and vibrant rural economy but at the same time it exposed the underlying weakness within the province's economy. Saskatchewan's economic base was too weak to support large-scale diversification - or so its politicians argued. Until the province had been effectively settled such diversification was impossible which meant that its economy would remain heavily dependent upon agriculture. A series of crop failures and low yields would dramatically affect the most carefully laid land settlement policies. People would get discouraged and abandon farming, or poor conditions might deter new settlers from settling which in turn would have a direct bearing upon future prosperity and development. Therefore, it was essential that Saskatchewan be settled as quickly as possible and that as many new acres be brought into production. The provincial government was aware of the seriousness of the problem, as was the federal government which was the custodian of the region's natural resources and responsible for land settlement and development.

At the 1918 annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Returned Soldiers Employment Commission it was expressed that there was not a sufficient amount of good, easily accessible farm land for soldier settlement. The Commission recommended that land for returned soldiers should be in districts already settled and adjacent to existing railway lines. If not enough land was available in certain districts the Commission urged the federal government to acquire land through expropriation. This was essential because, according to the Commission's figures, 70% of those Saskatchewan veterans who had returned by August 1917 had expressed a desire to settle on the land. The Commission also decided that the obligations for clearing wooded lands for soldier settlement in Saskatchewan clearly rested with the federal government.<sup>84</sup> The provincial Liberal government, under the leadership of Premier William Martin, agreed. Martin's government had committed itself to unlocking large areas of homestead land which had been staked out by land speculators. It was determined to push ahead and devise a policy which contributed to increased settlement in Saskatchewan. Despite the fact that the onus was on the federal government Martin was anxious to

cooperate and take the initiative.

Saskatchewan had the largest variety of settlement areas on offer. This included the largest proportion of Hudson's Bay reserve land which was located in the province and large tracts of virgin farmland surrendered by Indian bands to the SSB. Saskatchewan also disposed of the largest amount of school lands. Almost 95,000 acres were appraised and transferred to the SSB by September 1921; the valuation totalled \$1.375 million. Saskatchewan's contribution dwarfed that of its prairie neighbours: Alberta and Manitoba scraped up between 10-12,000 acres each valued at \$150,000 and \$152,000 respectively.<sup>85</sup>

Saskatchewan's single largest settlement project was the Porcupine Soldier Settlement. Created by an order-in-council in June 1919 it was made up of 200,000 virgin acres which had been withdrawn from lands previously categorised for homesteading in the Pasquia and Porcupine Forest Reserves of north-eastern Saskatchewan. In order to establish a uniform settlement pattern planners deemed 240 acres as the optimum settlement unit for the type of country involved. Soldiers were entitled to the standard homestead grant of 160 acres but were encouraged to purchase an additional adjoining 80 acre allotment. The sale of these allotments was to offset SSB expenditure on development projects such as roads and bridges which would facilitate the opening up of the region. 'To settle the timber lands', explained Commissioner Ashton, 'we need pioneers who must still bridge the period between establishment and production'. The Porcupine settlement provided the perfect example.<sup>86</sup>

The land was certainly raw and untamed. No provision had been made beforehand for housing, roads, bridges or preliminary clearing. The settlement was carried out under the harshest pioneering conditions imaginable. The region was heavily forested with thick stands of poplar and dense scrub regularly interspersed with sloughs, swamps and marshes. According to several soldier settlers they figuratively had to carve their homes and farms out of an unyielding environment.<sup>87</sup>

Despite the extreme hardships the pioneers began to push the frontier back in this bleak region. Several communities slowly emerged and the transcripts of the few Canadian soldier settlers that have survived are a colourful reminder of modern day homesteading. Nevertheless, the results were disappointing and the federal government's role left a lot to be desired. On 2 July 1919, the first day veterans were allowed to ballot for their choice of claim, 131

veterans took the opportunity to claim a soldier grant. By December 1923, 175 had been established of which twenty-five properties had been abandoned. Of the remaining 150 veterans sixty were married and ninety remained bachelors. However, there were a number of absentee operators and only 100 of the 150 actually lived on their holding. Two years later the total number of soldier grant entries had reached 283 in the Porcupine Reserve involving 67,200 acres or 105 square miles of farm land. Advances totalled approximately \$281,000.<sup>88</sup> To further facilitate settlement, land was obtained by the SSB in 1919 from the Hudson's Bay Company for the planning and development of the new townsite of Lens. In 1920 planning permission was given by Saskatchewan's Minister of Municipal Affairs and the townsite was resurveyed to provide a church, hotel, hospital, library, schools, recreational, industrial and residential districts. Lens was to be the model for new town planning in Canada.<sup>89</sup> The idea, including the name, never caught on however. Much of the plans stayed on the drawing board and the development which took place at Prairie River did so at a snail's pace.

The SSB was pleased to report that the Canadian settlers were of a good type. 'They now realise the proposition they are up against, and with remarkably few exceptions are applying themselves to the making of a real success'.<sup>90</sup> But did these settlers realise what they were getting themselves into? Complaints began to trickle in soon after the initial clearing. The federal government had committed itself to completing a road from Prairie River to the settlement area by the autumn of 1919. However, it was not until the summer of 1925 that the first roads were built for cars. The first car in the Prairie River area was purchased and used by the SSB, but even then the community was not linked to the provincial network for several more years.<sup>91</sup>

Between 1919 and 1930 the SSB spent \$60,000 draining sloughs, clearing bush, building bridges and local grid roads. But it was not enough as concern mounted over the years about the lack of settlers in the Porcupine Reserve.<sup>92</sup> Continued isolation induced by a lack of direct road and rail communications was a major factor; the weather was another. During 1920 drought and an early frost accounted for crop failures ranging from 15% to total failure.<sup>93</sup> The price collapse for primary products worsened the situation and was exacerbated by a succession of indifferent harvests until 1924 when very poor returns were again recorded. Although some soldier settlers made an early

windfall by planting alfalfa for feed, the majority had banked on wheat, the big cash crop on the prairies, and were broke by the winter of 1924. Once again the SSB encouraged the more destitute to find work in threshing gangs, road crews and lumber camps to supplement their family income. Local supervisors even went as far as to obtain preference of employment for these men in some camps.<sup>94</sup>

The lack of quick and efficient transportation facilities was not the only major complaint in the Porcupine Reserve. Charges of corruption and lack of proper supervision were levied by one disgruntled settler against the SSB supervisors, who he claimed, had lined their pockets at the expense of their clients. The purchase of the 80 acre allotment was another bone of contention. After seeing his neighbour carve out 160 acres of bush on a soldier grant the same disenchanted settler thought the SSB should have given that neighbour the 80 acres as a reward for all his hard work. Instead, the government charged that neighbour \$3 an acre which wiped out his cash reserve.<sup>95</sup> There were numerous cases of individual hardship, fortitude and perseverance and despite the federal government's optimistic projections it was clear that this particular soldier settlement project fell far short of its objectives.

What about the British soldier settlers in this region? Indications are that there were none in the first settlement period between 1919 and 1925. However, many Canadian veterans who settled in the region had returned with English war brides. Mrs. Mary McLenaghan, whose husband Ed was a field supervisor for the SSB in Kitscoty, Alberta and Prairie River, Saskatchewan between 1920 and 1925, had nothing but the highest praise for these women who endured tremendous personal hardship adjusting to Canadian pioneer life.<sup>96</sup> It was during the civilian phase of settlement that British settlers trickled into the area. In the autumn of 1924 Ed McLenaghan was despatched to England to select more. Based in Liverpool, McLenaghan spent seven months interviewing and screening prospective applicants for the 3,000 British families settlement scheme, a joint venture undertaken by the Canadian and British governments to promote British agricultural settlement in Canada. Between thirty and seventy families settled on abandoned soldier settler property in the Prairie River district in 1927. It was a mixed success with at least a 50% failure rate. '[L]ike most government schemes', complained one Canadian settler, 'the ones sent over to recruit these settlers were as unqualified as [those] they

selected'.<sup>97</sup>

As a soldier settlement project the Porcupine Reserve was a failure. Of the 500 homesteads reserved for British and Canadian ex-servicemen only 150 were occupied by Canadian veterans. The throwing open of the region to civilian settlement in 1926 and the attempt to settle British families in 1927 were indications of the failure of the scheme. By the 1930s only a handful of the original soldier settlers barely survived.

#### SECTION 4.4: OVERSEAS OPERATIONS

The appointment of Lieutenant-Colonel K. C. Bedson as the SSB's overseas representative in February 1919 coincided with Milner's reconstitution of the OSC.<sup>98</sup> The demand for information on Canadian soldier settlement schemes, assistance and legislation by Canadian and British veterans necessitated its creation. Headquartered in the Canadian emigration offices in London, Bedson coordinated his activities with J. Obed Smith, to disseminate literature, interview and screen prospective applicants and liaise between the SSB and the OSC.

The Colonial Office welcomed the appointment and was anxious to find out what further steps the Canadian government was taking to assist British veterans. Ashton reported that the 'sentiment in Canada is...that we need more Anglo-Saxons' and British ex-servicemen were seen as a vital component in solving the problem.<sup>99</sup> Personally, he was confident that Canada could absorb an almost unlimited number of men into her rural population provided they were willing to work. Capital was another matter. It was much more difficult to start farming without capital than it had been at the turn of the century. Even if a British soldier settler possessed capital, Ashton advised that he work one, preferably two years, with an experienced farmer in the district in which he intended to settle.<sup>100</sup>

Ashton was encouraged by Bedson's preliminary reports. For example, Bedson interviewed a group of British ex-officers and was impressed by their analysis of the emigration issue. 'All seem very keen and willing to take up land and fully appreciate the amount of work that is required if they are to be successful'.<sup>101</sup> More importantly, they had independent financial means and were prepared to purchase land privately. At the same time, they wanted to take advantage of the SSB's

offer of assistance in purchasing farm machinery and enrolling in courses at the various agricultural colleges. These were precisely the class of immigrant Ashton was seeking. He explained to the Minister of Immigration that this class of immigrant was the 'most desirous and should receive prompt attention and hearty support'.<sup>102</sup> Bedson informed George Fiddes, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, that soldier settlement in Canada would be a guaranteed success provided the federal government 'supplied funds and gave the men proper encouragement'; especially during the winter when grain farming was at a standstill and family income was tight.<sup>103</sup>

Determined to do all it could for this class of settler, the federal government did not want to attract publicity. The Department of Immigration wanted to make 'a definite yet not a public move towards encouraging [them] to settle'.<sup>104</sup> For one thing they did not want to be left open to charges of class distinction or favouritism regarding trans-Atlantic accommodation. It was evident that because these settlers had private means they could depart for Canada during the forthcoming summer and not have to wait for the following spring. It was suggested that Smith have a quiet word with the steamship companies to allocate some cabin space for these men before the remainder of the Canadian forces were despatched home. In light of the Canadian demobilisation riots earlier that year, Smith was reminded of the political sensitivity of such a move. If it was publicised that these men had been allocated cabin space and had landed in Canada before the last Canadians had returned home the domestic political uproar it would cause would be intense and unforgivable. Nevertheless, the government did not want to drag its feet for fear that these men would quickly lose interest. Quiet, firm encouragement was advised.<sup>105</sup>

The case of the ex-officers was the exception rather than the rule. The majority of British ex-soldiers eager to migrate had little or no capital and relied on the Imperial government's implementation of its free passage programme announced in April 1919. Its announcement was shortly followed by a meeting at the end of the month between the OSC, representatives from the War Office, Admiralty, High Commissioners and Agents-General. The application procedure and the administrative framework were the major focus behind the first set of meetings. The burning question, however, was the method and to what extent the various Dominions wanted to carry out the selection process themselves.<sup>106</sup>

The Canadian response to the free passage scheme was one of



cautious enthusiasm. The senior Dominion was quite proud of its immigration machinery whose success over the years was the envy of her sister Dominions. Assisted passage, however, was not a policy favoured by Canadian immigration officials or appreciated by the general public.<sup>107</sup> 'Canada will always welcome the man who can pay his way, and stand on his own feet, but the man in Canada who requires 'public assistance' is regarded as a failure'.<sup>108</sup> The special assistance given to British settlers, reported Sir William Clark, Britain's first High Commissioner to Canada, was resented by many Canadians who had carved their homesteads out of the wilderness without any government assistance whatsoever. They had worked hard, made good and could not understand the reason for all the 'mollycoddling'.<sup>109</sup> Canadian authorities were confident that their vast immigration network, extensive experience and advantageous geographical position would prove as effective in attracting British emigrants to Canada after the war as it had before the outbreak of hostilities and that emigration would therefore resume even without government subsidies.<sup>110</sup> Nonetheless, the granting of free passage to British ex-servicemen who had unselfishly defended the empire in its hour of need was a well deserved exception to the general rule.

When the British government first announced its free passage grants the Canadian government made it abundantly clear that it would retain a firm and independent hand in its selection of overseas immigrants. A precise set of guidelines was formulated governing the type of immigrant Canada wanted to encourage. As ever, agriculturalists remained the top priority. F. C. Blair, Secretary to the Department of Immigration and Colonisation, declared that Canada wanted a class of settler who immediately upon arrival became a producer and not merely a consumer. 'Rapidity of development in Canada at the present time depends almost entirely upon our own ability to develop the natural resources, establish new enterprises with fresh capital and develop further those already in existence'.<sup>111</sup> Canada did not want to attract or assist people who would compete against local labour, or promote the incursion of non-agricultural labour. This was particularly important because of the many Canadian ex-servicemen who were still looking for work.<sup>112</sup>

In September an inter-departmental conference was held in Ottawa between the SSB, Calder, Cory and Smith. The main focus was how to foster greater cooperation between the departments of the Interior and

Immigration on the issue of the colonisation and settlement of ex-Imperials under the Soldier Settlement Act of 1919. It was agreed that 1920 would be occupied with the settlement of Canadian veterans. For the most part, the federal government resolved that British veterans would be enrolled at the various agricultural training depots during that time. It was therefore decided to limit the number of British applicants during 1920 because of the heavy demand imposed by Canadian veterans.<sup>113</sup> The SSB was nevertheless authorised to initiate a moderate overseas publicity campaign to inform British applicants of what Canada was prepared to do, the benefits to be obtained and the procedure involved.<sup>114</sup>

For ex-Imperials wanting to farm under the auspices of the SSB, Canada was only willing to accept Imperial soldier settlers who were physically fit, morally upstanding, possessed an honourable discharge and could provide a deposit of £200 as a surety before sailing. They also had to have the cash necessary to pay the 20% downpayment required under SSB regulations for land, livestock, machinery and building materials obtainable through the Board. The selection and medical examination of British soldier settlers would take place in Britain. Shortly after Bedson's appointment a two-man selection board was established and despatched to Britain. The panel travelled throughout Britain appraising soldier applicants at the various regional emigration offices.<sup>115</sup> Only when the selection board was satisfied that an applicant was suitable did the OSC grant a free passage. However, non-agricultural veterans were eligible under the scheme provided they had assured employment in Canada. Free passage grants were also available to widows and children of deceased British veterans, women war workers and orphaned children of British ex-servicemen and women.<sup>116</sup>

Despite the establishment of an elaborate administration, preliminary reports indicated that the few British ex-servicemen and women who had already arrived in Canada during 1919 had no intention of pursuing farm work. Some, finding the SSB's monetary requisite too high, were scared off. Others, not wanting to farm under the SSB, simply lied about their intentions of embarking upon an agricultural career in order to claim a free passage. Instead, many possessed solid offers of employment through relatives and friends, were screened and approved as essential but non-agricultural immigrants. A major source of trouble was that many British veterans, provided that they met government landing regulations, entered Canada as ordinary immigrants.

Problems arose almost immediately as the economic climate in Canada worsened in 1920. To begin with, many of the ordinary ex-service immigrants possessed little or no money on arrival, became impoverished and quickly threw themselves upon the mercy of local charities. Those who arrived under the free passage scheme also began to find conditions difficult. Destitution quickly blurred the distinction between assisted and self-financing ex-soldier migrants. In some regions of Canada it was mistakenly assumed that all poverty-stricken British veterans had travelled to Canada under the auspices of the free passage scheme thereby bringing the entire scheme into some disrepute.

Confusion persisted as the SSB and immigration officials tried to clarify the situation. In January 1920 the Vancouver World proclaimed that 3,000 ex-Imperials were left scattered, stranded and impoverished throughout British Columbia. 'Arriving here in flocks without any properly authorised persons to advise them, these men are unable to take up land as they intended, some are stranded, others fit for charity', while Canadian authorities steadfastly refused to assume responsibility.<sup>117</sup> The Vancouver representative of the newly created Department of Soldiers' Civilian Re-establishment confirmed that the situation was rapidly deteriorating. The majority of the new arrivals were army pensioners with wives and families who had travelled to Canada independent of the free passage scheme. Many were disabled or mentally unfit and had no previous farm experience or no intention of farming. His view was substantiated by the Commissioner of Immigration in Vancouver, A. L. Jolliffe, who reported that of 150 recently disembarked British ex-servicemen and their families only two claimed farming experience. Approximately a half were pensioners, many were partially disabled and suffered from a variety of medical problems including shattered limbs, tuberculosis and neurasthenia. Over one-third had applied for immediate financial aid. As the situation became more critical, local repatriation and immigration officials demanded the implementation of preventative steps to halt the entry of disabled Imperial veterans, especially pensioners.<sup>118</sup>

Officials in Toronto faced a similar dilemma. They reported that an increasing number of ex-Imperials were eagerly looking for work, and clearly feared that these men would seriously interfere, if not compete, with the re-establishment of Canadian veterans.<sup>119</sup> Ex-Imperials might also become a source of serious unemployment in regions where there was already a large, unskilled labour force. For example, the DSCR unit

officer in Port Arthur, Ontario (the important grain handling terminus on Lake Superior), stated that the 400 to 600 registered ex-Imperials in his area had found plenty of work. But it was a region which possessed plenty of handymen and unless some of the ex-Imperials had special mechanical abilities a decline in the local economy would hit these men particularly hard.<sup>120</sup>

As winter approached the Ontario Soldiers' Aid Commission complained that it was being overwhelmed by destitute ex-Imperials and their families requesting assistance. Unable to find work these men were increasingly relying upon the Commission to provide money and shelter until they could obtain satisfactory employment. Its biggest complaint was the type of ex-Imperial immigrant arriving in Ontario.

Most of these men leave England with the intention of taking up farm work but for some reason or other drift to the cities and do not fulfil their original intention. The housing problem here in Toronto is as acute as the employment situation and we are finding it almost impossible to obtain situations, excepting as labourers, and as these men do not appear in any way willing to leave the City, it would appear...that steps should be taken to stop sending these families out.<sup>121</sup>

The Commission warned that the situation would worsen with the onslaught of winter.

The various Canadian veterans organisations found the problem of the ex-Imperial equally trying. The GWVA, the Army and Navy Veterans (ANV) and the Imperial Veterans in Canada (IVC) came under increasing pressure to provide financial assistance to tide over British veterans until they secured employment. As the number of penniless British veterans grew the financial strains of supporting their fellow British comrades began to show; particularly with the IVC who bore the brunt of the appeals from impoverished ex-Imperials. A spokesman for the Vancouver branch of the IVC implored the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson, to bring home to British veterans 'the unpreparedness of this country to absorb them into its industrial and agricultural life'.<sup>122</sup>

The federal government accepted the need for more drastic measures to stop the flow of destitute and agriculturally inexperienced ex-Imperials into Canada and in September 1920 displayed a tougher posture. Repeated warnings were despatched to the OSC that Canadian landing regulations would be strictly enforced. Safeguards, such as a more

thorough medical examination at the port of disembarkation, were suggested. Disabled pensioners were singled out and Ottawa insisted that the physically unfit be stopped at Canadian ports and deported before they became a public charge.<sup>123</sup> The SSB emphasised continually that only those ex-Imperials selected and accepted by its overseas office would be eligible for the benefits under the 1919 Act.<sup>124</sup> If 'other Imperial ex-Service men should happen to arrive without a ticket or without money for meals, it will be entirely their own fault, because they have been warned time and time again not to leave...without being thus provided'.<sup>125</sup> In many cases, Canadian officials put the reasons for failure squarely on the shoulders of the ex-Imperials themselves. They professed to believe that many had become destitute during the voyage by squandering their savings through gambling. They also assumed - without evidence - that the rigours of military life and routine had impaired the abilities of many British ex-servicemen to adjust to post-war civilian conditions. 'It seems to be a hard thing for ex-soldiers to get rid of the idea that they are no longer in the army and must shift for themselves. Most of them expect that upon arrival at a Canadian port they will be met by an official who will provide them with billets, rations, transportation, or cater to their needs until such time as they can find employment'.<sup>126</sup>

Amery was dismayed by Canada's increasingly hardnosed attitude towards British ex-servicemen. Canada's eagerness to cooperate, as expressed by its Prime Minister Arthur Meighen in October 1919, had vanished. Rather, it had been replaced by stringent selection guidelines rigidly enforced in London and at Canadian disembarkation ports.<sup>127</sup> In an attempt to clarify federal immigration policy, J. A. Calder, Minister of Immigration and Colonisation, met Milner and Amery in London in September 1920. When Calder broached the subject of extending the free passage scheme for another year Milner made it abundantly clear that the extension would be contingent upon a greater degree of 'corresponding action' on behalf of the Dominions, in particular an equal share of the financial responsibility. Milner stressed that because of the already enormous demands placed upon the British taxpayer an increase in the expenditure on overseas settlement could only be defended if it was shown to be essential in the context of the larger imperial policy of empire development. He also raised the issue of the self-governing Dominions' attitude towards its new British citizens. The Dominions showed a tendency to regard the arrivals from

the mother country 'too much from the point of view of the immediate utility of their labour and too little from the point of view of their potential value as citizens in the Dominions'.<sup>128</sup> New settlers had to be made welcome and not regarded as 'mere working hands [or] drudges'.<sup>129</sup>

Calder and Smith agreed that there was room for improvement in Canadian attitudes but the federal government remained resolute in its determination not to relax its policy. 'Our difficulty is not to make Canada better known in the Mother Country', echoed F. C. Blair, 'but rather to make an intelligent selection of those who are anxious to migrate'.<sup>130</sup> The federal government's main consideration, however, was not to flood the domestic labour market with unskilled non-agricultural immigrants. Moreover, the Colonial Office was convinced that the SSB was unlikely to expand its operations in Britain because 'men selected on this side are apt to regard themselves as entitled to special privileges in many directions, and this makes them somewhat difficult to deal with'.<sup>131</sup> As a result, the Colonial Office believed that the establishment in Britain of a system of testing farms or large agricultural training camps would probably be abandoned. Indeed, it did occur. In June 1920, the federal government decided in favour of a network of training and receiving stations for ex-Imperials in Canada to be administered by the SSB.<sup>132</sup>

The policy of disengagement continued with the withdrawal of Colonel Bedson as the SSB's overseas representative and the termination of his post on 31 January 1921. No qualification certificates would henceforth be issued in Britain. Those wishing to emigrate under the privileges of the Soldier Settlement Act were 'invited to proceed...as ordinary emigrants in the ordinary way'.<sup>133</sup> Upon arrival they were to apply to the District Superintendent of the SSB in the area they wished to settle and obtain the necessary information and advice on how to qualify for the benefits of the Act. Enquiries from prospective soldier settlers would in future be handled by Smith in London. No clear reason was given for Bedson's recall but it was implied that the emigration officials could easily cope with the additional number of applicants.<sup>134</sup> In reality, the decision was made to cut costs and rationalise overseas operations because the rush of British applicants never materialised. The federal government's conscious efforts to keep the number of ex-soldier migrants low and the enormous problems certain regions of the country were having with the new arrivals also influenced

their decision. Furthermore, Bedson informed the OSC that the new procedure did not eliminate the £200 deposit.<sup>135</sup>

The OSC regarded the decision to discontinue Bedson's services as a serious impediment to the aspirations of many ex-servicemen eager to settle in Canada. The Colonial Office firmly believed that because selection certificates were no longer obtainable in Britain it would discourage many ex-soldiers who might have entertained the thought of emigrating and applied for selection in Britain. More importantly, in light of the hardship many ex-Imperials had already encountered, they feared that a stronger sense of injustice would be created in the minds of those British ex-servicemen who proceeded to Canada and were rejected after having absorbed the expense of travelling across the Atlantic.<sup>136</sup> Macnaghten discussed at length with McLaren Brown and J. S. Dennis of the CPR the possibility of the CPR stepping in and taking over the work previously done by Bedson. The CPR were quite prepared to do so if officially requested by the federal government. Macnaghten agreed to write the Canadian High Commissioner urging him to support the CPR plan while Dennis promised to take up the issue with the federal government when he returned to Canada at the end of the month.<sup>137</sup> However, nothing came of the idea.

Of the 31.3% or 26,905 British ex-servicemen and their families who arrived in Canada under the auspices of the free passage scheme approximately two-thirds were women and children. The total number of ex-Imperials who migrated is much higher but impossible to ascertain because the figures do not exist for those who entered Canada as ordinary immigrants. What is clear from the sketchy statistics which have survived is that the free passage scheme failed to bring large numbers of ex-Imperial agricultural immigrants. For example, of the 1,382 applicants approved in the period October-December 1921, only 136 were classed as agricultural. The majority had experience in shipbuilding, railways, engineering, construction, metal working, electricals and commerce. Similarly, of the sixty-five female ex-service applicants in the same period only eight were classified as agricultural and were categorised as inexperienced farm hands.<sup>138</sup> The number of British farm applicants chosen through the SSB in London was minimal. In its first annual report, the SSB reported that 'some hundreds' of ex-Imperials had been examined and selected but no specific figure was cited. Four months after the ex-Imperial guidelines were announced Commissioner Ashton reported that 159 ex-soldiers had paid the

£200 deposit and had been granted selection certificates. Owing to shipping shortages in the spring of 1920 only fourteen had managed to sail. According to SSB records 340 ex-Imperials were selected in 1920 as suitable for farming in Canada, but only 266 actually reported to the Board upon arrival. Of these, 134 withdrew their deposit before or during training and only a paltry sixty-nine were assisted under the OSC free passage scheme.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, some like the Toronto Star must have wondered in dismay why only a handful of British ex-soldiers used the free passage scheme, and even fewer embarked upon agriculture when there were thousands of demobilised soldiers milling around employment bureaus in Britain.<sup>140</sup>

#### SECTION 4.5: THE WATERSHED

Although the war had effectively halted immigration it provided Canadian agriculture with tremendous impetus for expansion which was nothing short of phenomenal. Over 92,000 homestead entries were recorded during the conflict and between 1916 and 1921 a total of 40,000 new farms were established on the prairies alone.<sup>141</sup> The Dominion census of 1921 best illustrates the growth which occurred. Since the 1911 census the total number of farms increased by 28%, total farm acreage by 52.5% and total improved farm acreage by an amazing 95.3%.<sup>142</sup> The major factor behind this expansion was wartime demand which stimulated higher prices during and immediately after the war. For example, in 1917 wheat was fixed at \$2.21 a bushel, thrice its prewar level, and by 1919 it had reached \$2.38.<sup>143</sup>

Unfortunately, the short-term gains were derived at the expense of the industry's long-term stability and future prosperity which held disastrous consequences for soldier settlement. The Allies' insatiable appetite for Canadian wheat and the sharp rise in world wheat prices created a dangerous investment cycle on the prairies. Although Canadian farmers responded patriotically to the federal government's plea for increased food production, the primary demand was for wheat. As demand and prices rose farmers pressed more and more land into wheat production, purchased additional land or rented from those neighbours who had enlisted. Official estimates demonstrated that the extension of the total area of farm crops in Canada between 1914 and 1918 had increased from 33.4 million acres to 51.4 million acres, an increase of



53.8%.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, it was a staggering accomplishment but it did contain an ominous indicator. Prairie farmers had staked their future in the production of a single cash crop which made them extremely vulnerable to market fluctuations. This vulnerability was reflected another way, in prairie wheat acreage statistics. Between 1914 and 1918 wheat acreage increased from 9.3 million to 16.1 million, out of a national total in 1918 of 17.3 million, the largest on record.<sup>145</sup> This meant that 93% of Canada's wheat production in 1918 was concentrated in the three prairie provinces. Wheat was indeed king but only if prices remained high.

Farmers continued to stake their immediate prosperity on wheat because it was easier and quicker to expand grain acreage compared to a similar expansion in livestock production. Not only was grain farming the 'path of least resistance' for expanding prairie farmers, but high prices were a much better stimulus and could accomplish more for the back-to-the-land movement than the best run propaganda campaign ever could.<sup>146</sup> The dependence on a single staple for export was risky to say the least; something the Canadian government had recognised and attempted to rectify prior to the war through the promotion of mixed farming. If a balance between grain and livestock could be struck between a larger number of farmers it would cushion their losses and create a degree of income stability when one or the other markets were weak. Specific wartime demand and high grain prices impeded such a practical approach. Besides, it was easier to obtain farm credit for grain farming as capital investment in the livestock industry was more expensive because of the necessity to build and maintain the facilities to manage an efficient operation.<sup>147</sup>

Inflation also kept pace with rising wheat prices. Whatever profit farmers obtained from increased cultivation and the bullish grain market was quickly absorbed by rising production and labour costs, additional investment and inflation. As a result, many farmers went into debt in anticipation that the boom times would continue after the war. However, over-capitalisation and over-expansion were not the only consequences faced by prairie farmers who persisted in pursuing the cultivation of a single crop during the war.

The high costs incurred did not make prairie farmers more efficient. In fact, many farmers, attracted by high grain prices, abandoned the tried and proven dryland farming techniques of summerfallowing, fall tillage and crop rotation. Inevitably, the desire

to maximise profits and "cash in" led to increased soil exhaustion. Plant diseases, such as rust, began to make inroads and reduce crop yields in many western areas. The situation was further aggravated between 1916 and 1918 by drought and frost which reduced yields even more and contributed to soil infertility. After the record bumper crop of 1915, in which wheat yields averaged 29.3 bushels per acre, successive yields steadily declined until 1919 when the worst yield of 9.7 bushels per acre was recorded.<sup>148</sup> Of course, as long as prices remained artificially high and more land was brought under cultivation the drop in yields could be offset. Farmers would still be able to pay their expenses and maintain a comfortable living standard. However, they had sacrificed the long-term productivity of the land for short-term monetary gains. The farmer had resorted, in the words of the Canada Year Book, to 'extensive rather than intensive agriculture'.<sup>149</sup>

Wheat prices remained buoyant in 1919 at \$2.38 per bushel. Federal officials must have felt optimistic when framing the Soldier Settlement Act of 1919 because the generous credit terms, in combination with high prices, would ensure a high success rate amongst soldier settlers and a quick return on their investment. The enormous demand for soldier settlement literature, the keen interest amongst returning veterans and the initial rush of applicants during the summer of 1919 seemed to justify the federal government's confidence. There was no better stimulus to settlement than high prices.

Prior to the 1920 harvest, all indications were that the firm lead established by the Canadian government had started to pay handsome dividends. 'This is more or less the beginning of things', explained Major John Barnett in September 1920, chairman of the SSB, 'in as much as a survey of next season's breaking indicates that at least 500,000 acres of new land will [have been] broken' since the SSB's establishment.<sup>150</sup> Preliminary production and freight receipts for 1920 demonstrated that the 10,000 producing soldier settlers had already generated \$3 million in rail and shipping revenue while producing crops valued at \$10 million. Barnett estimated that with 250,000 acres of new soldier settlement land under cultivation in 1921 and twice the number of soldier settlers, freight receipts would double.<sup>151</sup> In fact, close to 190,000 new acres were brought into production, raising the aggregate amount of new acres to 600,000. At the end of the 1921 fiscal year soldier settlers occupied 5.23 million acres. Even with the collapse of the market price for grain during the middle of the 1920 harvest,

veterans brought in farm receipts totalling \$12.7 million.<sup>152</sup>

Nineteen-twenty was the highwater mark. SSB officials were mildly surprised that even with the market collapse and the high labour and threshing costs, 9,372 settlers of the 12,174 obligated to meet their first loan payment by 1 November 1920 had done so in whole or in part. Approximately \$2.3 million was due of which 53.9% or \$1.24 million was collected. In addition, soldier settlers were urged to make payments above the minimum required to reduce their debt load as soon as possible. Prepayments amounting to a little over \$1 million were subsequently received.<sup>153</sup> Collections had gone exceedingly well under the economic circumstances, and it was with a great deal of pride and gratification that the results obtained 'placed the stamp of guarantee upon soldier settlement work'.<sup>154</sup> The self-congratulation proved premature.

From the SSB's inception in 1918 to 31 March 1921 a total of 1,470 cases of abandonment were reported compared with 329 who repaid their loans in full. However, the SSB considered 7% as a norm for the amount of adjusted or salvaged claims. The adjustment figures were broken down into three categories. Fraud, misrepresentation and dishonesty made up a small number of cases. Just under one third were attributed to causes beyond the control of the settler, such as death, recurring illness or disability due to war service and crop failure. The lion's share of the blame for failure was unfairly but squarely placed on the shoulders of the struggling settler by the SSB. Poor temperament, bad management and abandonment for no apparent cause were cited as factors for discontinuance.<sup>155</sup> Certainly, these factors did play a role, but to claim that failure was largely due to personal attributes or flaws was preposterous. Economic factors, such as high prices for land, stock and equipment at a time when commodity prices were plummeting, were the major causes of failure. Most veterans had arrived too late to reap the benefits of wartime profits, but still had to pay inflated wartime prices and pay off their growing debts from falling incomes.<sup>156</sup> By March 1923, 3,285 soldier settlers or 14.5% had discontinued farming. A year later the total had climbed to 21.5% or 5,203. The SSB acknowledged the fact that poor land, crop failure and low farm prices contributed to the growing number of abandonments but it still maintained as late as 1924 that the personal factor was a major reason for failure.<sup>157</sup>

There was no question that the boom and bust of 1920-21 was a

major contributory factor behind the failure of many a brave soldier settler. The price of wheat was less than half the 1919 price and reached only \$1.11 per bushel in 1921.<sup>158</sup> But it was not the major factor because many soldier settlers were already experiencing difficulties prior to the depression. The worsening situation was further complicated between 1919 and 1924 by persistent drought conditions which plagued farmers throughout Canada and lowered their crop yields even further.

Not everything was doom and gloom. There were personal as well as regional triumphs but they went by unnoticed by the general public. For example, N. H. McTaggart, Progressive MP for Maple Creek in the arid south-western corner of Saskatchewan had between 450 and 500 soldier settlers in his constituency. Barnett informed him that ever since 1921, despite the economic downturn, the Maple Creek area had led Saskatchewan in the number of repayment collections. On a national level, there were three SSB districts in McTaggart's constituency which compared extremely well with the rest of Canada in regard to loan repayment, salvage and general prosperity. Only fourteen or fifteen salvage cases had been reported and just as many had repaid their loans in full. Barnett wrote McTaggart that 'the very fact that...you have not heard from [any] of them indicates that they are happy, contented, and prosperous'. Similar stories were reported in western Ontario and the maritimes.<sup>159</sup>

Farm diversification remained an important priority for the SSB as cereal prices remained depressed. Settlers were encouraged to maintain a small number of pigs, cows and poultry to offset expenses. In turn, any income generated from grain receipts could be used to reduce financial obligations. The federal Department of Agriculture supported the SSB's attempts to promote thrift, economy and diversification amongst its settlers because it was 'essential to the prosperity and continued success of the settler'.<sup>160</sup> It agreed with the SSB's conclusions that for the moment grain farming was a gamble, especially in the prairies. Farmers, argued the Saskatoon district supervisor, by utilising all the sources of revenue that were available through mixed farming, stabilised family income and reduced the impact induced by a serious set-back such as a crop failure.<sup>161</sup> There was another interesting point concerning successful soldier settlers recalled Ashton. 'It was very noticeable that among our settlers the men who were succeeding best were the men who, in addition to being good

farmers, were good salesman also'.<sup>162</sup> Better farming meant the application of modern scientific, managerial and commercial techniques which ensured security and increased returns. By 1925, however, it was too late to start advocating these commonsensical ideas. The collapse of grain prices in 1920-21 had already done the damage.

Indebtedness became a serious problem for the surviving soldier settlers after 1921. Of the 5,203 adjustment cases processed in 1924, one half were located in Manitoba and Alberta. Alberta was also in the embarrassing position of having the lowest collection record in the country which averaged 38%. Manitoba's 1,600 farm abandonments was considered extremely high as only 56% of the 3,707 soldier settlers remained on their properties by 1926.<sup>163</sup> As the number of salvage cases increased throughout the 1920s revaluation became a highly contentious issue which highlighted the growing political significance of soldier settlement.

The 1921 federal election clearly demonstrated the degree of veteran dissatisfaction with the Meighen government's apparent lack of compassion and its inability to satisfy a variety of demands. The growing importance of the veteran issue in Canadian politics, and in particular soldier settlement, was reflected by the activities of the various veterans' organisations prior to the federal election in December. But the real problem remained unemployment. Although it inflicted hardship on all sections of Canadian society, the plight of the returned man received an enormous amount of attention. In 1919 a special House of Commons committee was bombarded with letters, telegrams and evidence from a variety of individuals, boards of trade, municipalities and commercial associations warning the federal government of the danger of veteran unemployment. It recommended that the eradication of veteran unemployment was a national undertaking and therefore a federal responsibility; whereas civilian unemployment was strictly a municipal and provincial matter. It advised that steps be taken to meet the emergency both administratively and financially.<sup>164</sup> Meighen agreed that the Dominion authorities had to play a key role in ameliorating unemployment, but 'the great thing to do...is to enforce with the least possible delay such a definite general policy as will get business going again and get our people back to work'. Ex-servicemen could not be singled out or treated separately, according to Meighen. Unemployment affected everyone and demanded national cooperation and sweeping solutions. Privately, Meighen had run out of patience with the

veteran issue. At the beginning of the election campaign in September 1921 he told Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, a prominent British Columbia conservative, that Canada's experience with the veterans over the last year 'amply demonstrates that the Government in its entire policy towards ex-service men reached the limit of generosity that the country could sustain'.<sup>165</sup>

However, the Canadian electorate, including a large number of ex-soldiers, had run out of patience with Meighen's government and he was soundly defeated at the polls. He readily admitted to Amery after his defeat that unemployment and veteran discontent were contributory factors, but the primary reason for the defeat was the depression and the Conservative government's unpopular wartime activities.<sup>166</sup>

However, the change of government did not bring about an improvement in the economic fortunes of many veterans. Unemployment continued to rise and the demands by the veterans' associations for resolute action grew louder.<sup>167</sup> Deflation and the phenomenal drop in prices for primary commodities had wiped out the equity of many soldier settler properties. According to one confidential report undertaken by the Liberals during the 1921 election campaign the situation bordered 'on a financial crisis for the loans advanced by the [Conservative] Government are in excess of what the farms are worth at 1922-1923 prices and valuations'. Losses between the 1919-20 price levels and the actual 1922-23 valuations was estimated at \$10 million.<sup>168</sup>

The report severely criticised the previous government's financial management of the entire soldier settlement operation. It conceded that the economic situation had initially led to exorbitant prices but it charged the SSB with carelessness in its selection and loan granting procedure. Overstaffing, it claimed, was another problem which contributed to high costs. The only solution, according to the report, was to increase the interest on the loans by one-half a percent and extend the repayment period by five years.<sup>169</sup> The Liberal government re-opened the investigation into soldier settlement when it appointed a parliamentary inquiry in March 1922. A number of relief measures were suggested to ease veteran indebtedness. They included the revaluation of land, livestock and equipment, exemption of interest for a period of years, a reduction in the rate of interest and the extension of the redemption period on stock and equipment loans. The inquiry recommended that the original repayment period of four to six annual instalments on stock, equipment and building loans, as set out in the 1919 Act, be

extended to twenty-five years. Barnett was forced to admit in front of the committee that under the old regime the SSB repayment scheme had been too heavy in 1919. Similarly, the committee suggested that a sliding scale of interest exemptions be granted to soldier settlers who had settled before the end of 1921. Both points were accepted by the government and incorporated as amendments to the legislation in 1922.<sup>170</sup>

Although the government wrote off over \$10 million in interest under the 1922 amendments its optimistic forecast that 1923 would be a better year was quickly dispelled. The SSB reported at the year's end that over \$88 million remained outstanding of a total of \$107 million in loans and interest charges. In August the SSB was transferred to the Department of Colonisation and Immigration and became the Land Settlement Branch. The move was, in part, designed to rationalise settlement administration and operations in light of the latest attempt in Anglo-Canadian cooperative colonisation: the 3,000 British Family Scheme. In 1924 new regulations were introduced limiting the granting of new loans to soldiers who applied to purchase farms already owned by the SSB, or to those who owned land and could have applied for a loan but did not, or those to whom the SSB were committed because they had been recommended for training or had a justifiable claim to be dealt with. However, it was stated emphatically that no new applicants would be accepted for training or qualification.<sup>171</sup>

Deflation continued to afflict livestock prices: the SSB estimated in 1924 that livestock values had decreased by over 50%. However, it was not until 1925 that remedial legislation was brought in to reduce indebtedness caused by the drastic fall in livestock values. In the end, close to \$3 million was struck from soldiers' accounts.<sup>172</sup> The burning issue remained land revaluation. After travelling extensively throughout Manitoba a leading provincial Liberal fund raiser noted that land revaluation was the most important issue with soldier settlers. '[T]hese people will never attain any degree of success until the purchase price has been reduced and these people placed in a position where the land will earn enough to pay all the carrying charges and permit a profit to the individual'. In February 1925 the Manitoba provincial command of the GWVA, supported by the United Farmers of Manitoba, agreed and insisted that all soldier settlement lands receive revaluation.<sup>173</sup> The following month, at the annual conference of the provincial commands of the GWVA, demands were made that the government

introduce amendments, including land revaluation, to the soldier settlement legislation to relieve the hardship being suffered by the majority of settlers.<sup>174</sup>

According to E. J. Garland, an Alberta MP and an outspoken champion of the veterans' cause, land revaluation was not only urgent but imperative. Ever since 1922 Garland had campaigned unsuccessfully for the necessary land revaluation legislation and in 1925 he once again failed.<sup>175</sup> However, time was on his side. Pressure mounted until eventually veterans succeeded in winning the necessary concessions from a minority Liberal government in 1926. The appropriate legislation was introduced but the constitutional crisis which ensued for most of that year prevented its passage. In January 1927 the newly elected Liberal government was reminded of its obligation to Canada's veterans by the newly formed Canadian Legion and the United Farmers of Alberta. Aware of their responsibilities, politicians on both sides of the House demanded fairness, leniency and compassion for Canada's soldier settlers, while the government duly promised to deal effectively with land revaluation.<sup>176</sup> Between July 1927 and the spring of 1930 the SSB laboured under the enormous burden of reappraising 8,103 applicants out of the 10,697 eligible to apply. By the end of 1929, 7,043 appraisals had received their final review. It was estimated that the aggregate sale price of the 7,043 properties was \$26.5 million. The total adjustment granted in these cases was \$6,379,930, representing an average reduction of 24%. When revaluation was completed in 1930 a total of 8,047 farms had been revalued at \$30.39 million with reductions estimated at \$7.4 million. This was written off and was far below the estimated \$10 million forecast by Robert Forke, Minister of Immigration and Colonisation, in March 1927.<sup>177</sup>

The agricultural situation stabilised by 1925-26. In 1927 Canada produced a record bumper crop, only to be surpassed by an even bigger yield in 1928.<sup>178</sup> With revaluation and two excellent harvests surely soldier settlement was at last on a solid footing? The depression of 1929 wiped out any optimism that remained and brought greater disappointment and despair to those soldier settlers who survived. According to the 1931 SSB report, of the original 24,491 soldier settlers who had received loans from the SSB over half had abandoned their holdings by 1931. Just 11,612 remained and of these only 5,500 were judged to be in a secure position with a good chance of success. Approximately 4,500 veterans had a reasonable chance and it was this



group which the SSB focussed its attention and supervisory resources. The remaining 1,600 or so fell under the category "likely to fail" but the SSB was determined not to abandon these cases and it was evident 'that dispossession of their farms under existing conditions would not be warranted'.<sup>179</sup>

The onslaught of a new depression forced the SSB to further alleviate the plight of the surviving soldier settlers. Yet another special committee was appointed in early 1930 by the Liberal government to examine pensions and returned soldiers' problems. In May its findings were presented to Parliament in which its most important recommendation was a 30% reduction of the total outstanding indebtedness of all soldier settlers still occupying their farms. All livestock liens held by the SSB would be terminated and the stock reverted outright to the settler. No debate ensued and after just two days of procedural necessities its recommendations became law. With an impending federal election that July it was not surprising that the committee's recommendations were legislated so quickly. By March 1931 a further \$11.3 million was written off the soldier settler account.<sup>180</sup>

#### SECTION 4.6: THE FINAL CHAPTER

The SSB was officially abolished in 1931.<sup>181</sup> However, there were a few final financial adjustments for the remaining soldier settlers. Clearly, the depression hampered the newly elected Conservative Prime Minister's efforts to appease Canada's ailing soldier settlers. Wheat prices reached a record low and the burden of accumulated arrears forced R. B. Bennett to introduce additional remedial legislation in 1933 in the form of interest remission. A new feature was the bonus amendment. It was designed to reward the thrifty, hard working settler who showed determination to make his repayments. Previously, remedial legislation had benefitted the good, bad and indifferent settler. After detailed discussions with soldiers' organisations and settlers themselves the amendment was designed to remedy the disparity of previous legislation. It provided that for every dollar the settler contributed towards his arrears or instalments the government would equal that payment to relieve some of the burden. As a precondition settlers had for the first time to pay insurance premiums and local taxes on their holdings. Previously soldier

settlement lands were considered Crown lands and therefore not subject to taxation. By 31 March 1935 soldier settlers had earned a bonus totalling \$1.9 million.<sup>182</sup>

In the end, the financial cost to the nation was substantial. From its inception to March 1935 Canada's soldier settlement programme had cost \$136.3 million. Repayments amounted to \$52.2 million and approximately \$35.2 million was written off through various remedial legislation inaugurated since 1922. This left \$48.9 million outstanding. However, when compared to the cost of veterans' benefits paid out by the federal government between 1914 and 1935, approximately \$1 billion, the sums spent on soldier settlement were exorbitant. The equivalent of 13.6% of veterans' benefits was spent on just over 4% of the total number of able-bodied Canadian veterans!

But what of the survivors? Of the 24,998 soldier settlers who received loans from the SSB, 10,828 or 43% were still in possession of their farms. The precariousness of the situation was reflected by the equity grading system adopted by government officials which measured the likelihood of a settler's success. The table demonstrated that 32% of the settlers had an equity of 40% or more in their farms; 17% fell within the 20-40% bracket; 15% had less than 20% equity and 36% had no equity at all.<sup>183</sup>

What had gone wrong with Canada's soldier settlement policy? Undoubtedly, the international economic climate was a crucial factor which ultimately dictated the degree of 'success' or 'failure' of the scheme. The artificially high wheat prices created during the war and maintained by the immediate post-war boom, gave the policy's architects the illusion that their programme had been established on a secure and prosperous footing. Patriotism, a sense of national obligation to the returned man, and the relief of a return to normality clouded the minds of politicians, administrators and citizens alike to the dangers of establishing a national land settlement policy for a select few during an inflationary spiral of unprecedented proportions. The brave few who warned that high prices were no substitute for actual farming experience were unfortunately ignored.

Indeed, the unforeseen severity of the collapse of prices for primary produce between 1920-22 and 1929-33 was a tremendous blow to soldier settlers because they were particularly vulnerable to wild price fluctuations. Many had purchased their farms at the peak of the inflationary period and were forced to sell their produce at the

beginning of the deflationary cycle. This ensured long-term indebtedness and abandonment. Despite increased yields and the brief price recovery in the latter half of the decade it was by far too late for those surviving soldier settlers to recover. The utter collapse of the world wheat market in the early 1930s proved to be the final nail in the coffin for many more. Indebtedness, despite the government's policy of increased financial leniency, would haunt the decreasing number of hardy survivors until well into World War II.

Although the initial collapse of world grain markets and their indifferent performance throughout the inter-war period were a debilitating factor, one of the real problems was the ideological basis which underlined the pursuit of the policy. Throughout the 1920s Canadians continued to ignore the profound changes which were transforming their economy. The belief that prosperity, and hence national stability, depended upon the maintenance of a strong and vibrant agricultural sector ignored the industrial and urban transformation which was slowly changing the face of Canadian society. Already by 1921 just over one half of its citizens resided in urban environs. And yet the census takers revelled in the fact that almost one half of the population still lived in rural areas. Canada's insistence on pursuing a post-war back-to-the-land policy, of which soldier settlement was an integral part, was testimony to the power of the agrarian myth in Canadian society. By looking back to the "good old days" of pre-war Canada and attempting to revive the tried and tested policies of large-scale immigration, land settlement and resource development, it demonstrated her insecurity and uncertainty about the future. The way forward was through industrial integration and diversification not agricultural expansion and the specialisation in staple exports.<sup>184</sup> The shortcomings of soldier settlement and the various empire migration schemes in the 1920s proved the economic and social fallacies inherent in the ideology of the soil. However, it took the events of the 1920s, in particular the depression of 1929-33, to bring home this message.

There was no question that the unpredictable economic climate and Canada's obsession with an outdated agrarian ideology which ignored current economic realities contributed to the misery and hardship suffered by many soldier settlers. However, there were numerous mistakes, oversights and miscalculations which had a more immediate impact on the scheme. Foremost amongst these was the type of settlement

land available and its relative isolation. The areas targeted for settlement, such as the Peace River district and the northern park belt, were largely inaccessible, lacked proper communications facilities and possessed vast quantities of marginal land. It was this over-optimistic assumption that poor types of land could be brought under cultivation quickly and profitably which produced some of the SSB's most embarrassing admissions of failure.<sup>185</sup>

During the Royal Commission on Settlement and Immigration in Saskatchewan in 1930, Major John Barnett, former SSB chairman, admitted that there had been an inadequate supply of good Dominion land for soldier settlers in 1918. As a result there was a good deal of settlement in agriculturally marginal territory, in particular the inter-lake region of Manitoba. He estimated that of all the Crown land surveyed for settlement during his tenure in office only one-third was suitable for farming and even then that was being extremely generous. Therefore it was not surprising for some districts to report a high failure rate.<sup>186</sup> Several other witnesses testified to the inability of the SSB to provide land near essential railway and road facilities. The federal government had always recognised this essential prerequisite and faithfully promised to build or finance additional branchlines and grid roads to new settlement areas. But construction took time. In the meantime farmers had to ship their grain to market. Soldier farmers wondered whether the government fully realised the implications several miles could make to the success or failure of their operation. 'The homestead areas are now so far back from the shipping points and from schools and roads, that new settlers are exposed to considerable hardships and are forced out to remote districts', remarked one witness. Another witness explained that in many instances the distance from the railway was more important than the quality of the land. It had been his experience that many settlers, both soldier and civilian, were not interested in land if it was more than seven or eight miles from the railroad.<sup>187</sup> And yet soldier settlers in the Prairie River district of Saskatchewan were encouraged to settle over twenty miles from the nearest railway with no roads!

'Farming is not a calling in which easy profits may be expected', warned Commissioner Ashton after his two month tour of western operations in 1924. 'The margin of profit is small and easily disappears when poor methods are followed'.<sup>188</sup> Everyone recognised that supervision was the key to success and that farm diversification or

mixed farming allowed for greater security because it shielded the settler in time of market instability. But it was evident that many soldier settlers ignored this sound advice until it was too late. It was easier and more lucrative to gamble and hope that grain prices stayed buoyant despite the fact that such a risk left them exposed to the vagaries of the market. Besides, it took an enormous amount of time, effort and long-term capital to develop properly a successful herd of cattle or brood of pigs. And livestock prices were exorbitantly high immediately after the war making it more worthwhile in the short-term to harvest grain rather than raise stock.<sup>189</sup> It was unfortunate, if not tragic, that inflation and the market dictated these conditions because the more northerly settlement areas were easily better suited for mixed farming. The collapse of the wheat market in 1920-21 compounded by a cycle of severe climatic conditions which adversely affected grain growing between 1919 and 1924 proved the harsh reality of the situation.

Another problem was the heavy financial burden which many soldier settlers experienced. Although the government clearly stipulated that candidates make a deposit of 10% (and 20% for British ex-servicemen), in the case of many Canadian veterans it was waived. The burden of indebtedness was therefore 100% for many men and as a result they had to shoulder a much heavier financial commitment than the average civilian farmer was allowed to carry. In 1930 the SSB admitted that the burden of payment in the present economic climate had been overwhelming and that 'soldier settlers [had] never received the supervision and directional assistance [that] the financial structure of their loans indicate[d] as desirable'.<sup>190</sup>

It was hinted by some government observers that the lack of personal investment in the majority of cases bred an attitude of indifference. They argued that because many soldier settlers did not have a large personal stake in their venture it was easier for them to bail out when the going became difficult or unmanageable rather than stay on and persevere. The corollary was that the more personal capital invested the greater the chance and the determination to succeed. Of the 4,785 settlers in 1929 graded as "barely holding their own" or "likely to fail" with 20% equity or less, the average indebtedness ranged from \$3,700 to \$4,450. This compared very unfavourably with the two top grades who possessed between 20-40% equity or more and whose debt load ranged between \$2,300 and \$3,180. The charge that soldier settlement was just another big loan venture came home to roost during

the 1920s and the government was left holding the short end of the financial stick. These same experts concluded that the best settler for Canada was a man who possessed his own capital and was able to start farming on his own without help from anyone.<sup>191</sup>

The question whether soldier settlement was a success or failure poses an interesting problem. As a policy it was an outright failure. The expenditure of approximately \$145 million by 1935 and the large sums which were written off and remained outstanding were damning indictments. The "failure" of 57% of the SSB's clients points to a similar conclusion. However, there were individual successes. These figures ignore the 6,500 soldier settlers who claimed their soldier grant and farmed without SSB assistance. Even abandoned farms were not lost as many were resold to neighbouring farmers or newly arrived immigrants. In fact, resold land usually brought in a slight profit, especially before land prices slumped in 1923. Expansion did not stop despite the gloomy economic climate. The number of soldier grant entries which were claimed after the initial rush, although small, reflected that some soldier settlers were able to expand and make a comfortable living. In fact, the Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement recorded that very few of the successful soldier settlers operated on their minimum entitlement of 160 acres. Rather they had expanded to 320 acres. As Barnett astutely pointed out, everyone was aware of the failures but not the successes: 'very often your good man is not known even by neighbouring farmers'.<sup>192</sup>

Barnett was adamant that although a 57% failure rate may have been high, as far as he was concerned, architects of any settlement scheme had to expect realistically a 40-50% failure rate. Besides, just because a large number of soldiers failed as farmers it did not mean that they were failures. 'There are a very very large number of them who shaken by war conditions and war service, recovered their equilibrium through this experience on the farm, and the work has meant the saving of a very large amount of money in other ways'.<sup>193</sup> Perhaps, but the remarks made by the former SSB chairman could be dismissed as bureaucratic bravado. Nevertheless, Canada had tried to honour its obligation to its returned men by providing them with an opportunity to re-establish themselves into civilian life and contribute to the future prosperity of the nation. Unfortunately, the general public did not realise how costly their sacrifice had been. Even more disconcerting was that the resettlement of British ex-servicemen was a

complete fiasco. In the final analysis, despite some individual successes, Canada's soldier settlement policy was a disappointing failure. It is to the other Dominions which we must now turn our attention.

## ENDNOTES

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9. Ibid.



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11. Barber, pp. 288-89; Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners', p. 88.
12. CAR, 1918, p. 585.
13. Barber, p. 289.
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cite the total number of employees as 1,594 but the sources cited did not mention that figure.

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59. CAR, 1920, p. 241 and pp. 459-60; First Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 7; GAA, Garnet D. Ellis Papers, Ellis to his parents, 23 September 1918.

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67. Ontario, Sessional Papers, LII, part VIII (1920), Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Kapuskasing Colony, 1920; PAO, RG 3, E. C. Drury Papers, Boxes 27 and 44, general correspondence and evidence on Kapuskasing enquiry; Johnston, Drury, pp. 167-71.
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78. Special Committee, 1924, p. 68 and p. 90; Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement (Saskatchewan) 1930, Record of Proceedings, testimony of Major John Barnett, vol. 23, p. 36.
79. PAM, Royal Canadian Legion, Manitoba Provincial Command Papers, MG 10 C67, Box 11, Minute Book (1919-26), 7th meeting, 24 October 1919, p. 2; ibid., Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources, Land Branch Files, RG 17 D1, Box 19, f. 346, charts showing the number of unoccupied quarter sections in districts and municipalities east and west of Lake Manitoba, 1930; NA, memorandum by T. W. Dwight, Department of the Interior, Forest Branch, 19 June 1919, Hume Papers, vol. 4, f. 3.

80. R. W. Murchie and H. C. Grant, Unused Lands of Manitoba (Winnipeg: Department of Agriculture and Immigration, 1926), p. 61; McDonald, p. 39; NA, memorandum by Ashton, 'Inspection Tour of Prairie Provinces and British Columbia, 19 August-19 October 1924', 30 October 1924, Magrath Papers, vol. 3, f. 8.
81. Wilmot Yates to Prime Minister Borden, 6 March 1920, Borden Papers, vol. 238, f. RLB 2389, pp. 133169-69a; PAM, A. Findlay to V. Winkler, Minister of Agriculture and Immigration (1915-20), 5 January 1920 and S. M. Hayden to Winkler, 2 April 1920, Valentine Winkler Papers, pp. 3309-12 and p. 3375.
82. SAB, G. Harmon Jones, Secretary of the Saskatchewan Military Hospitals Commission, to Calder, 22 February 1916, Calder Papers, M2-5, pp. 1463-4.
83. SAB, undated Saskatchewan Returned Soldiers Employment Commission memorandum (probably late 1918), S. J. Latta Papers, M5-IV-54, Saskatchewan Returned Soldiers Employment Commission file, 1917-20.
84. SAB, papers of the Saskatchewan Returned Soldiers Employment Commission, G459.1, minutes of the 1918 annual meeting, 18 July 1918; ibid., minutes of the meeting of the executive committee of the Saskatchewan Returned Soldiers Employment Commission, 5 September 1917, C. A. Dunning Papers, M6:X-204-7, pp. 43285-6.
85. SAB, Acting Deputy Minister of the Department of the Interior to Dunning, 1 September 1921, Dunning Papers, M6:Y-3-5-0, p. 12062. For Dunning's career see J. W. Brennan, 'C. A. Dunning, 1916-1930: The Rise and Fall of a Western Agrarian Liberal', in John E. Foster, ed., Developing the West (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), pp. 246-70.
86. GAA, Soldier Settlement Board file, W. Strojich, Superintendent, Farm Service Division, Department of Veterans Affairs, to Herbert R. Harris, 17 August 1966; PAO, RG 3, Ferguson Papers, memorandum by Ashton entitled 'Some Aspects of Land Settlement', c. 1923.
87. Herbert R. Harris, The Book of Memories and a History of the Porcupine Soldier Settlement and Adjacent Areas, 1919-1967 (Shand Agricultural Society, 1967), pp. 5-8.
88. Sixth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board (31 December 1927), p. 8; GAA, SSB file, Strojich to Harris, 17 August 1966; Harris, pp. 9-11; E. C. Morgan gives an interesting description of the balloting procedure at Prairie River, p. 53.
89. Morgan, 'Soldier Settlement in the Prairies', pp. 53-4; SAB, transcript of interview with Mrs. Mary McLenaghan by A. N. Nicolson, 13 January 1976, pp. 12-14.
90. First Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 94.
91. SAB, McLenaghan transcript, p. 12.
92. GAA, SSB file, Strojich to Harris, 17 August 1966.
93. First Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 94.

94. GAA, SSB file, Strojich to Harris, 17 August 1966; SAB, transcript of interview with William Howse conducted by D. H. Bocking, 12 June 1963, pp. 9-13; ibid., R-E440, transcript of interview with J. H. Brockelbank compiled in January 1976. In his introduction to the Howse transcript, Bocking records the prices for certain farm produce during the depression years of the 1930s. The price of no. 2 Northern wheat, which averaged 30 cents a bushel, fell to 17 cents. Barley, which cost 7 cents a bushel to thresh, was sold for 4 cents a bushel. Dressed beef was 1 cent per pound and live prime steers fetched \$9 to \$10 each. Eggs sold for 2 or 3 cents a dozen. One wagon load of oats bought one pair of rubber boots.
95. SAB, transcript of interview with Mrs. T. Mawhinney conducted by D. H. Bocking, 12 June 1963, pp. 8-9.
96. SAB, McLenaghan transcript, p. 10 and p. 13.
97. Harris, p. 15 and p. 38; SAB, Howse transcript, p. 19.
98. PRO, CO 721/2/f. 17, Bedson to Macnaghten, 12 February 1919; First Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 27.
99. CAR, 1917, pp. 530-31; PRO, CO 721/2/f. 17, Ashton to Macnaghten, 12 January 1919. The announcement of the new SSB regulations was made in Ottawa on 14 February 1919 but no mention was made of conditions which applied to British veterans. A copy of the announcement was forwarded to the Colonial Office by Lieutenant-Colonel Pelletier, Agent-General for Quebec, 13 October 1919; Amery Papers, Box F.73, Meighen to W. H. Greenwood, 18 October 1919; Amery to Meighen, 25 November 1919.
100. PRO, CO 721/2/f. 17, Ashton to Macnaghten, 12 January 1919.
101. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Bedson to Ashton, 3 April 1919.
102. Ibid., Ashton to Calder, 15 May 1919.
103. PRO, CO 721/2/f. 17, Fiddes to Macnaghten, 20 February 1919.
104. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Acting Deputy Minister of Immigration and Colonisation to Smith, 30 May 1919.
105. Ibid.; Desmond Morton, '"Kicking and Complaining": Demobilisation Riots in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918-19', Canadian Historical Review, LXI, 3 (1980), pp. 334-60.
106. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 1, Amery to Bedson, 16 April 1919.
107. Glynn, pp. 209-38.
108. PRO, BT 56/45/CIA/1958, memorandum by Wilfrid Eady, secretary of the Industrial Transference Board, 8 July 1929.
109. PRO, LAB 2/1235/EDO 220, Clark to Amery, 10 January 1929; Ministry of Labour memorandum, 4 March 1929. For Canadian attitudes to British immigration in the 1920s see John A. Schultz, 'Canadian Attitudes toward Empire Settlement, 1919-1930', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, I (1973), pp. 237-51; Sir Clifford Sifton, 'The Immigrants Canada Wants', MacLean's Magazine, 1 April 1922.

110. PRO, CO 721/5/f. 82, conference between OSC, Agents-General and High Commissioners, 5 March 1919.
111. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 1, Blair to Cory, 30 June 1919.
112. Ibid., part 2, Blair to Smith, 29 September 1919; Blair to Smith, 30 September 1919; Smith to Plant, 7 October 1919.
113. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 2, Memorandum of conference held on 11 September 1919 between Calder, Cory, Smith and the SSB, 12 September 1919.
114. Ibid.
115. CAR, 1920, p. 243; First Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 27; PRO, CO 721/2/f. 17, Bedson to Macnaghten, 12 February 1919; NA, RG 76, vol. 610, f. 901346, part 8, information bulletins released by Cavers for SSB, 10 December 1919, 4 and 9 January 1920.
116. CAR, 1920, p. 243.
117. Vancouver World, 15 January 1920.
118. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 2, W. Butterworth to R. P. Porter, 9 December 1919; Jolliffe to Blair, 30 and 31 January 1920; ibid., part 4, Jolliffe to Blair, 3 and 30 August 1920, and 3 September 1920.
119. Ibid., part 2, regional reports submitted to the Deputy Minister of Immigration and Colonisation, January 1920; ibid., part 4, Harold Buckle, Acting Secretary of the Ontario Soldiers' Aid Commission, to Blair, 15 September 1920.
120. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 2, regional reports submitted to the Deputy Minister of Immigration and Colonisation, January 1920.
121. Ibid., part 4, Buckle to Blair, 15 September 1920.
122. Ibid., Blair to Smith, 29 September 1920; PRO, CO 721/20/2478, W. H. Roberts to Wilson, 25 June 1920.
123. Ibid., vol. 585, f. 821340, part 2, Blair to Jolliffe, 19 January 1920; Blair to Dr. J. A. Amyot, Deputy Minister, Department of Public Health, 31 January 1920.
124. Ibid., vol. 610, f. 901346, part 8, Maber to the Deputy Minister of Immigration and Colonisation, 26 July 1920; ibid., vol. 585, f. 821340, part 3, memorandum by Maber, 18 March 1920.
125. Ibid., vol. 585, f. 821340, part 4, Smith to Blair, 31 August 1920.
126. Ibid., W. R. Little, Acting Secretary of Immigration and Colonisation, to F. A. Walpole, Office of Secretary-Treasurer, GWVA, 23 September 1920.
127. Amery Papers, Box F.73, Meighen to Greenwood, 18 October 1919; Amery to Meighen, 25 November 1919; NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 4, Amery to Calder, 15 June 1920.
128. PRO, CO 721/13/2491, Milner to Devonshire, 1 October 1920.



129. PRO, CO 721/17/2491, Colonial Office memorandum dealing with the interviews between the Colonial Office, Calder and Smith at Brown's Hotel, 19 September 1920.
130. NA, RG 76, vol. 12, f. 72, part 12, Blair memorandum, 21 June 1921.
131. PRO, CO 721/19/3848, extract from the minutes of the 54th meeting of the OSC, 29 June 1920.
132. Ibid., memorandum by Bedson, Scott and Wilson on 'Agricultural Training Centres for Ex-Imperials in Canada', n.d.
133. PRO, CO 721/15/3848, Smith circular to all Canadian government emigration agents in Britain, 25 November 1920.
134. First Report of the Soldier Settlement, p. 27.
135. PRO, CO 721/19/3848, Bedson to Plant, 27 November 1920.
136. PRO, CO 721/15/3848, OSC to Smith, 15 December 1920; minute by Malcolm Jones, junior Colonial Office official, 15 December 1920.
137. Ibid., minute by Macnaghten, 9 December 1920.
138. NA. RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 7, overseas employment register for October-December 1921 compiled by the Ministry of Labour, 1 January 1922.
139. First Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 27; NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 3, Ashton to Blair, 23 April 1920; PRO, CO 721/63/3848, Ashton to Plant, 18 June 1923; Plant to Ashton, 13 July 1923.
140. Special Committee, 1919, pp. 221-2; Toronto Star, 12 June 1920.
141. Thompson, Harvests of War, p. 61.
142. J. H. Thompson, '"Permanently Wasteful but Immediately Profitable": Prairie Agriculture and the Great War', Canadian Historical Association Papers (1976), p. 193.
143. Thompson, Harvests of War, p. 59; R. MacGregor Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1874-1923, I. A Political Biography (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1958), p. 393.
144. Canada Year Book (1920), p. 6.
145. Thompson, Harvests of War, p. 61; Canada Year Book (1920), p. 5. Thompson noted that in 1916 wheat and its support crop oats accounted for 90.3% of the total prairie field crop acreage. Even more startling is the concentration of wheat production in the prairies in 1918.
146. Thompson, Harvests of War, p. 61.
147. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
148. Ibid., p. 68. The yield in 1916 was 17 bushels per acre and dropped to 11 bushels per acre in 1918. [Canada Year Book (1920), pp. 4-5.] Conversely, wheat in 1915 sold for 80 cents a bushel compared to the 1917

and 1918 harvests which sold at the fixed price of \$2.21 per bushel. Despite the drastic reduction in yields between 1915 and 1917-8, the smaller 1917 harvest netted \$405.7 million in revenue compared to the 1915 harvest revenues of \$325 million.

149. Thompson, '"Permanently Wasteful but Immediately Profitable"', p. 198; Canada Year Book (1920), p. 5.

150. Barnett to George Buskard, Meighen's private secretary, 22 January 1921, Meighen Papers, vol. 49, f. 199, p. 27686.

151. Ibid; CAR, 1921, p. 345.

152. Canada Year Book (1921), p. 810; CAR, 1921, p. 345.

153. Barnett to Sir Joseph Flavelle, Canadian industrialist, financier and millionaire, 6 October 1921, Meighen Papers, vol. 17, f. 29, p. 9644. In percentages, the total number of soldiers who had made a contribution to their first installment was 77%. When the first SSB report was released in March 1921 the total had climbed to 82%. First Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 19.

154. First Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 20.

155. Ibid., p. 18.

156. Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, p. 151.

157. Second Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 9; Third Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 8.

158. Dawson, I, p. 393.

159. SAB, Barnett to N. H. McTaggart, 10 April 1924, N. H. McTaggart Papers, microfilm, Reel 1, section 1, f. 15; memorandum by Ashton on inspection tour of Middlesex, Huron, Perth, Oxford, Norfolk and Brent counties in Ontario, 10 June 1924, Magrath Papers, vol. 3, f. 8; memorandum by Ashton entitled, 'Western Canada Inspection Tour, 1925, with some notes on a visit to Simcoe and Muskoka areas in Ontario', 2 November 1925, ibid., p. 7.

160. NA, Records of the Department of Agriculture, RG 17, vol. 3122, f. 61-1(1), ff. 278192, J. H. Grisdale, Deputy Minister of the Department of Agriculture, to Ashton, 6 April 1921.

161. Ibid., Ashton to Grisdale, 31 March 1921; Second Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 14.

162. Ibid., ff. 299791, Ashton to Grisdale, 30 December 1924.

163. Third Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 17; Canada Year Book (1922-23), p. 938; Murchie and Grant, pp. 61-2; PAM, John Bracken Papers, f. 138, eighth and last Annual Convention, Manitoba Provincial Command, GWVA, report of the Agricultural Committee, 17 March 1926.

164. Special Committee, 1919, p. 58.

165. Meighen to Tupper, 10 September 1921, Meighen Papers, vol. 54, f. 226, p. 30437. For an examination of the battle between the veterans and the federal government over gratuity payments and pensions see Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, 'The Bonus Campaign, 1919-1921: Veterans and the Campaign for Re-establishment', Canadian Historical Review, LXIV, 2 (1983), pp. 147-67; Desmond Morton, 'Resisting the Pension Evil: Bureaucracy, Democracy, and Canada's Board of Pension Commissioners, 1916-1933', Canadian Historical Review, LXVIII, 2 (1987), pp. 199-224.
166. Amery Papers, Box F.74, Meighen to Amery, 14 December 1921. 'It is my contention', wrote Meighen, 'that only under very extraordinary circumstances can a War Government succeed in a post-war contest'. For an examination of the post-war unemployment issue see Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, pp. 12-43.
167. H. Coleburne, Dominion Secretary of the ANV, to King, King Papers, J1 series, vol. 72, pp. 61093-4; Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, pp. 152-4.
168. King to Charles Stewart, Minister of the Interior, 15 May 1922, report included in letter, King Papers, J1 series, vol. 82, p. 63903.
169. Ibid., p. 69304.
170. Second Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, pp. 16-19; Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, pp. 152-3; Sixth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, pp. 18-9; Canada Year Book (1921), pp. 809-10; ibid., (1922-3), pp. 938-9.
171. Third Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 7; Canada Year Book (1924), pp. 925-6.
172. Third Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, pp. 8-9; Sixth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 19.
173. M. G. Walker to King, 9 December 1922, King Papers, J1 series, vol. 82, pp. 69809; PAM, Bracken Papers, f. 36, 7th Annual Convention, Manitoba Provincial Command, GWVA, February 1925; United Farmers of Manitoba to King, 28 February 1925, King Papers, J1 series, vol. 119, p. 101077.
174. NA, Legion Records, minutes of the conference of provincial commands of the GWVA, 12-14 March 1925, vol. 1, f. 4, pp. 302-3.
175. Canada, Debates, 1925, IV p. 3553; ibid., 1922, IV, p. 3349.
176. Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, p. 204; PAM, Bracken Papers, f. 138, Report of the First Annual Convention of the Manitoba Provincial Command, Canadian Legion, 18-19 March 1926; resolution on land revaluation passed at the annual convention of the United Farmers of Alberta, 18-21 January 1927, King Papers, J1 series, vol. 165, p. 119898; King to J. O. Davis, Secretary of the South Tisdale Soldier Settlers, n.d. (probably September 1926), ibid., vol. 130, pp. 110777-9; Canada, Debates, 1926-7, I, p. 15, p. 59 and pp. 228-46.
177. Eighth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board (31 December 1929), pp. 10-14; Tenth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board (31 March 1935), p. 14; CAR, 1930-31, p. 572; Canada, Debates, 1926-27, I, p. 904. For the revaluation procedure see the Sixth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, pp. 18-20 and the Seventh Report of the Soldier Settlement Board (31

December 1928), pp. 10-11. The most complete documented example of a revaluation case to my knowledge is in the GAA, A. H. Stewart Papers, diaries, accounts and correspondence, 1922-41. For detailed departmental procedure see PAM, Records of the Minister of Mines and Natural Resources, Manitoba, RG 17 A1, Box 1, f. 10, SSB lands file, 1929-31; *ibid.*, RG 17 D1, Box 19, f. 346, Land Branch files, 1930-52.

178. Canada, Annual Departmental Reports, II, (1926-27), Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, p. 5; *ibid.*, II, (1927-28), Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, statement by W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister, p. 5; Seventh Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 11.

179. Ninth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board (31 December 1931), pp. 5-6.

180. CAR, 1930-31, p. 572; Canada, Debates, 1930, III, p. 2471 and p. 2639; Ninth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 10.

181. CAR, 1930-31, p. 573.

182. Tenth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 5 and p. 14. For the municipal taxation issue see above report, pp. 6-7 and J. J. McGurran, Acting Secretary of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, to King, 29 December 1929, King Papers, J1 series, vol. 184, pp. 131328-30.

183. Tenth Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, pp. 10-14; CAR, 1935 and 1936, p. 151. It is interesting to note that of the 10,273 active soldier settlers as of December 1928, 6,652 or 64% had not received financial assistance when obtaining land therefore relieving their initial burden of debt. Seventh Report of the Soldier Settlement Board, p. 22.

184. W. L. Morton, 'The 1920s', in J. M. S. Careless and R. C. Brown, eds., The Canadians 1867-1967 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada Ltd., 1967), pp. 205-35; Thompson and Seager, pp. 76-103.

185. Special Committee, 1924, p. 91 and p. 68.

186. Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement (1930), vol. 23, Barnett testimony, p. 34, p. 36 and p. 42.

187. *Ibid.*, vol. 35, W. G. Duncan testimony, p. 28 and p. 33; vol. 34, C. S. Spiller testimony, pp. 4-5.

188. Memorandum by Ashton of his inspection tour of the Prairie provinces and British Columbia, (19 August-19 October, 1924), 30 October, 1924, Magrath Papers, vol. 3, f. 8, p. 14. In 1930 Ashton remarked that agriculture in the 1920s was a tough business for civilian and soldier settlers alike. The average Canadian farmer had been lucky to make a living plus 5% on his investment since 1918; 'Soldier Settler Problems', memorandum by Ashton, 7 April 1930, King Papers, J4 series, vol. 147, f. 1200, pp. 107272-3.

189. The SSB demonstrated in 1924 that soldier settlers were beginning to diversify as there was a marked increase in livestock figures. However, deflation had wiped out the value of the stock. For example, in 1919 a team of horses in the Peace River district sold for \$500 while a three year cow fetched \$150. The same grade of cow in 1924 was lucky to be sold for \$12. Special Committee, 1924, p. 64; Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement, vol. 35, p. 34; Third Report of the Soldier Settlement Board,

p. 12.

190. Special Committee, 1924, p. 69; Ashton, 'Soldier Land Settlement in Canada', p. 497; memorandum by Ashton, 7 April 1930, King Papers, J4 series, vol. 147, f. 1200, p. 107270.

191. Memorandum by Ashton, 7 April 1930, King Papers, J4 series, vol. 147, f. 1200, p. 107271; E. J. Ashton, 'Some Colonisation Problems: A Canadian View', United Empire, XXI (1930), pp. 420-4; Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement, vol. 32, L. B. Larson testimony, p. 27.

192. Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement, vol. 32, p. 28; Special Committee, 1924, p. 84.

193. Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement, vol. 23, p. 63 and p. 35.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **SOUTH AFRICA AND THE POLITICISATION OF SOLDIER SETTLEMENT**

I have often told (the Nationalists) that the British Empire is not an octopus, whose feelers enwrap all to their doom; but something greater, whose benevolent embraces will hold them for ever; from them they will never escape, and in a very little while, never want to.

Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, author, politician and landowner, 5 May 1926.<sup>1</sup>

Since the early nineteenth century and until very recently, Britain was the single largest source of white immigrants to South Africa. But compared to Canada and Australia, British emigration to South Africa was small, particularly in the first four decades of the twentieth century. It averaged only 10,000 annually before 1914, and after World War I it dropped to a mere 2,900 per year up to the outbreak of war in 1939. However, despite the modest numbers, its contribution to South African society, culture and politics was important.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1914 the fledgling Union government acknowledged that owing to the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), the shortage of unskilled labour, and recurrent labour unrest on the gold fields, there was little interest in emigration to South Africa. The 1921 census confirmed the inertia of post-Union immigration.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, immigration was a major issue between the political parties in South Africa during the inter-war period. One of the protagonists was a small but determined group of individuals, the 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association, established in 1920, who attempted to reverse the downward trend of British immigration to South Africa and redress the growing numerical imbalance between Afrikaners and English by bringing British immigrants, particularly ex-servicemen, into the country as settlers. The Association's name referred to a policy originating after the Napoleonic Wars, when the major objectives had been to bolster colonial defence, promote colonial development and relieve domestic social problems. The policy was revived after the Boer War, motivated this time by the British government's attempt to foster white racial harmony and create a new rural order in South Africa. However, the creation of a large,

united and prosperous rural English-speaking community in the conquered Boer republics faced a host of obstacles.

## SECTION 5: THE MILNER LEGACY, 'POOR WHITEISM' AND THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

What made land settlement and immigration in South Africa so politically explosive? The answer can be found in the legacy of the reconstruction period after the Boer War, the growing political power of the bywoners or 'poor whites' and the impact of World War I on party politics in South Africa. The architect of Britain's reconstruction policy was Sir Alfred Milner, British High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor of the Cape and Transvaal between 1897 and 1905. For Milner, economic recovery was the key to a new and vigorous British South Africa.<sup>4</sup> Milner's chief fear was Afrikaner nationalism which he regarded as the most dangerous and destabilising force in Southern Africa. But to foster racial harmony, Afrikaners had to be encouraged to participate in the new industrial order and British immigrants had to be attracted and resettled in large numbers in the rural areas.

Milner emphatically denied that his objective was to swamp the Afrikaner. He wrote, 'I do no more want to exterminate the Dutch than I want to exterminate the British'.<sup>5</sup> However, his determination to introduce large numbers of English-speaking settlers to ensure British strategic and political dominance was made very clear in late December 1900:

I attach the greatest importance of all to the increase of the British population. If, ten years hence, there are three men of British race to two of Dutch, the country will be safe and prosperous. If there are three of Dutch to two of British, we shall have perpetual difficulty.<sup>6</sup>

In order to offset Afrikaner political power, which was concentrated in the rural areas, Milner sought large numbers of loyal, English-speaking settlers to infiltrate the rural districts. The thousands of Imperial troops awaiting demobilisation provided an obvious source. He readily admitted that it would be difficult to settle these men, who were for the most part agriculturally inexperienced. However, Milner believed that if they could be induced to stay, they would inculcate loyalty (or fear) among the rural Afrikaners, provide a firm foundation for additional settlement from Britain, and, because of their military

experience, prove invaluable as a trained militia in case the Boers attempted another insurrection.

Milner's policy failed miserably. Of the thousands of Imperial troops who had fought in South Africa less than 2,000 participated in the government-sponsored resettlement programme. According to the novelist John Buchan, a member of Milner's reconstruction administration and attached to the Land Settlement Department between 1902-03, the conditions which were essential to success were found wanting.<sup>7</sup> For a start, the soldiers lacked the initial capital necessary to outfit properly a farm in South Africa. As a result, they showed little enthusiasm for the project. Moreover, the work of the Land Department which was to coordinate British settlement work was agonisingly slow. Essential surveys, inspections and land purchasing were neither quickly nor efficiently carried out. The general muddle fostered discontent and impatience amongst the more enterprising soldiers and they soon lost interest, returned to Britain or sought employment elsewhere. By July 1902 very little had been accomplished. Despite a large injection of funds and the reorganisation of the entire settlement operation, the onset of a severe drought and a wide outbreak of cattle fever dampened official expectations and hampered further the efforts of those who had not already been 'choked off' by maladministration and unforeseen natural calamities.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, rural depopulation was becoming a major domestic problem. Ever since the 1880s rural whites, largely Afrikaners, were being forced off the land through speculation and the commercialisation of agriculture, and migrated to the urban and industrial centres to look for work. The rinderpest epidemic of 1896-7, the British army's scorched earth policy during the Boer War and poor yields due to sustained drought and disease between 1903 and 1908 dramatically increased an already alarming trend, with the greatest exodus occurring between 1911 and 1921.<sup>9</sup> Impoverished, uneducated and unskilled, poor whites were put in direct competition with African labour. This led Afrikaners to argue that jobs were hard enough to find without immigrants competing in the same job markets. Why help the poor of other countries to relocate, argued Afrikaner nationalists, when there were enough poor in South Africa? The Dutch churches, instrumental in publicising the problem before the Boer War, advocated rehabilitation to stem poor whiteism. Their pleas were heard by the two leading Afrikaner political parties created in the aftermath of the Boer War, Het Volk and



Orangie Unie, who endorsed a back to the land policy. It included supervised rural settlements and an education system to meet and safeguard the position of the poor whites vis-à-vis the non-white population.<sup>10</sup> Another important stimulus to Afrikaner political consciousness derived from the expansion of South Africa's industrial base, as the result of which Afrikaner workers were increasingly exposed to English-speaking workers and their methods of industrial organisation. They began to assimilate these techniques until eventually they assumed complete control of several industrial unions in the gold fields. From this power base the unions cultivated important links between urban and rural Afrikaners, strengthened the cultural bond and widened the political potential of a reinvigorated Afrikanerdom.<sup>11</sup> The Afrikaners' ability to organise industrially signified a growing political power which could not be ignored.

The Unionist Party of South Africa, which represented the majority of the English-speaking population and the mining interests, had made the promotion of land settlement with state assistance a major plank of its party platform since 1910. Repeatedly it urged the vigorous development of South Africa's farming potential through the initiation of an effective land settlement policy and introduction of suitable British immigrants. The party executive deemed it imperative to initiate state-aided immigration, provide land on reasonable terms, and, if need be, acquire land by the state for settlement purposes. Furthermore, it advocated a tax on unimproved land. The latter measure, though controversial was essential because it would force the large speculative landowners and companies to unlock or develop their holdings, thereby promoting the general prosperity of the nation.<sup>12</sup>

Patrick Duncan, a former member of the reconstruction administration and a leading Unionist MP, advocated the establishment of a system of state-subsidised passages to promote the immigration and settlement of experienced agriculturalists in South Africa. He acknowledged, however, that Louis Botha's government was not willing to take the initiative. If anything was to be done at all it would be by private effort.<sup>13</sup> Another Unionist MP, Sir Charles Crewe, was similarly convinced that the ruling South African Party (SAP) would not help immigrants at all. The issue was politically sensitive for Botha because his 'own people object and he is too afraid of losing [political] support to risk anything'.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, Botha had to walk a fine line for fear of antagonising his

Afrikaner support. Politicians from all bands of the political spectrum agreed that there was an urgent necessity to secure a larger white population on the land. The problem was who and from where. The Unionists supported state-aided immigration to reinforce the small, isolated white community in South Africa. The SAP remained non-committal because of its delicate position in the middle ground between the two white political communities. The Nationalists, a militant Afrikaner wing which had split from the SAP in January 1914, were vehemently opposed to any form of state-aided immigration on the grounds that the money was better spent helping the poor whites to relocate back to the land. They condemned state-aided immigration as 'political immigration...the thin end of the wedge inserted by the Unionists'.<sup>15</sup> It was an astute political move. Not only did it allow the Nationalists to cultivate growing Afrikaner discontent and mould it into a firm political base, but it gave them political credibility within the Afrikaner community as the defenders of Afrikaner culture.

Afrikaner nationalism, accelerated by the war, enabled the Nationalists to gain important inroads within traditional SAP strongholds. The rebellion in September 1914 of hardline, anti-British Afrikaners who had remained uncomfortable under the yoke of British rule was easily suppressed, but it increased the polarisation within the Afrikaner community between the moderates and pro-war supporters of Botha and his political lieutenant J. C. Smuts, and the rebels and their sympathisers who supported the Nationalists led by General J. B. M. Hertzog. As the war intensified, the rift within the Afrikaner community widened as many more Afrikaners shifted allegiance from the SAP to the Nationalists because of South Africa's expanding commitment to the war and the support Botha and Smuts received from British interests in South Africa. Furthermore, Hertzog's cry of 'South Africa first' rekindled Afrikaner aspirations of republicanism and the goal of a new and independent South Africa outside the imperial framework.<sup>16</sup>

On the outbreak of war the majority of English-speaking South Africans were similarly swept up in a wave of patriotism which made loyalty to South Africa a constituent of a wider loyalty to Britain and the empire. The Governor-General of South Africa, Lord Buxton, confirmed this in a confidential cable to the Colonial Office in 1917: 'The Unionists have always claimed to be the special guardians of the British connection and have taken every opportunity of pressing for a larger contribution to the cost of [empire]'.<sup>17</sup> This was abhorrent to

vast numbers of Afrikaners, who promptly rejected it and it merely contributed to resurgent republicanism. As nationalist attitudes hardened in both white communities it was evident that the breach between them and within the Afrikaner community itself had widened. Within this turbulent environment, the British government became anxious to support and keep Botha in power because it was through him that British imperial interests, and hence the British connection, would be maintained.<sup>18</sup> British immigration also was looked to as an important though sensitive means of sustaining the connection.

#### SECTION 5.1: PRIVATE INITIATIVE DURING THE WAR

As predicted, the initiative was left to private enterprise during the war when a gigantic flood of prospective immigrants was expected to follow demobilisation.<sup>19</sup> The campaign for increased British immigration and land settlement after the war was led by a group of ultra-loyalists within the Unionist party. These men included some of the most prominent and active English-speaking politicians, financiers and newspaper proprietors in South Africa. Leadership was provided by the examples of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick and Sir Thomas Smartt, two wealthy and influential entrepreneurs who had developed an avid interest in progressive agriculture.

Author, politician, former partner of the gold mining house H. Eckstein and Co. and devout Milnerite, the colourful Fitzpatrick was a leading pioneer of the citrus industry in South Africa. In 1913 he initiated the Sundays River Settlement irrigation project near Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape.<sup>20</sup> Initially intended as a non-profit-seeking, cooperative, share-holding venture, the scheme was specifically designed to promote the settlement of British immigrants in South Africa. It was a task which absorbed his energies for the next ten years, consumed enormous amounts of capital and eventually defeated him. Nevertheless, it reflected his determination to increase the English-speaking population in South Africa by means of land settlement, spurred by his conviction that British immigration and settlement could defeat the political expectations of Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, Fitzpatrick's efforts symbolised the continuation of Milner's original policies of the previous decade.

Sir Thomas Smartt was to irrigation development what Fitzpatrick

was to citriculture. Doctor, progressive farmer and politician, Smartt practised at Britstown in the arid north-western Cape or Karoo where he settled in 1880. Indeed, it was Smartt's interest in agriculture which embarked him upon his political career. In April 1912 he became Unionist party leader until its merger with the SAP in November 1920. After the general election in February 1921 he was appointed Minister of Agriculture in Smuts's second administration. He made his first land purchase for the Smartt syndicate in 1884, which he founded and which he served as its managing director until his death in 1929.<sup>22</sup> At its peak, the syndicate owned 50,000 morgen (approximately 100,000 acres), which were developed as an agricultural showpiece and a tribute to Smartt's conviction that irrigation held the key to the successful development and expansion of South African agriculture.

The remaining members of the group included Sir Lionel Phillips, Sir Patrick Duncan and Sir Charles Crewe. Phillips, like Smartt and Fitzpatrick, was an avid agricultural enthusiast, and sat as a director on the boards of several private land settlement companies. However, he preferred to channel his interest in agriculture and land settlement mainly into voluntary efforts and causes. A man of great enthusiasm and energy for public affairs his significance lies with his organisational prowess, administrative experience and financial contacts. As managing director of the Johannesburg office of the Central Mining and Investment Corporation, one of the largest and most powerful gold mining conglomerates in South Africa, he was able to employ his managerial skills in conjunction with his financial contacts for fund raising.

The outspoken Crewe was a prominent Eastern Cape politician, soldier and journalist. Wholly committed to the imperial cause in South Africa, his power and influence stemmed from his part-ownership of the East London Daily Dispatch. Determined and energetic, he possessed a strong sense of public duty. With the possible exception of Fitzpatrick, he was most vigorous in campaigning for an aggressive immigration policy to attract British settlers after the war.<sup>23</sup> As a former member of Milner's 'kindergarten', Duncan had first hand knowledge of the aims and shortcomings of Milner's immigration and land settlement policies. Like most leading Unionists, he was deeply concerned about the relationship between the black and white races in South Africa and the ability of the European races to maintain their 'permanent preponderance' in the population.<sup>24</sup> In 1909 he proposed through the 'White Expansion Society' the placement of young emigrants

possessing a limited amount of capital with South African farmers. After 1910 he became the Unionist party's leading exponent of the need for a state-aided land settlement and assisted migration policy.<sup>25</sup>

Haggard's visit to South Africa in February-March 1916 rekindled the immigration issue at a time when English-Afrikaner relations were at their lowest. Buxton and J. X. Merriman, one of the Cape's shrewdest and most respected parliamentarians, warned Haggard while enroute of the need for caution and tact in South Africa. Owing to the delicate political situation and Afrikaner sensitivity to immigration, he was strongly advised to avoid making public pronouncements regarding the settlement of British ex-servicemen in South Africa after the war. 'Now is like a magazine full of high explosives teaming with sedition and anti-English feeling', explained Merriman. 'Any...advocacy of the introduction of British immigrants will be made the text for fiery appeals to the backveld....Such a crusade will render poor Botha's task doubly hard'.<sup>26</sup> Botha was all too aware of the problem, according to Fitzpatrick. It was better to work quietly, avoid publicity and not give the Nationalists a chance to attack the government.<sup>27</sup>

Haggard had no intention of creating political waves and heeded the advice. He too was alive to the danger that an ill-timed remark would do unending damage to the imperial migration cause in South Africa. Conceding that it was unlikely the South African government would initiate an immigration policy, he admitted that the prospect of land settlement in the Dominion was poor, especially for the ordinary British working-class migrant, because the uncaptialised immigrant farmer could not compete with his African counterpart. South African agriculture required capital, much more than in the other Dominions, because of the emphasis on private investment and the need to develop new farming methods such as irrigation and other forms of water conservation. This situation was in part dictated by South Africa's climate, extremely demanding and sometimes inhospitable. Haggard concurred with leading Unionists that if anything was to be achieved it would be through private initiative. He therefore submitted that British half-pay and retired officers with capital provided a small but potentially useful class under the circumstances. Merriman agreed. 'The most we can hope for is for a special immigration of [half]-pay officers and the like with moderate means and no ambition beyond making a home instead of a fortune'.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the poor outlook in South Africa Haggard's mission spurred

the English-speaking immigration enthusiasts into action. J. W. Jagger, a successful Cape businessman, Unionist politician and educationist, formed the South African Settlers' Information Committee (SASIC) shortly after Haggard's visit. He was a keen and energetic promoter of settlement in the Dominion and enlisted Smartt, Fitzpatrick, Duncan and several other prominent Unionist politicians to sit on the committee. A London committee was established soon afterwards. W. P. Schreiner, South African High Commissioner, was asked to sit on the London committee; although he fully supported the objects of the SASIC, he did not see fit to accept the invitation because of his official status. However, he saw no reason for the Trades Commissioner not to serve provided the Union government did not object. Meanwhile, the SASIC was seeking recognition from the British government in connection with work on a future central migration authority.<sup>29</sup>

Private enterprise in South Africa did not go unnoticed in Britain, and Milner, for one, fully appreciated the effort. 'Nobody knows better than I that South Africa is the weakest link in the Imperial chain, and that link has certainly not been strengthened by the war'. He still maintained that the only way to prevent the imperial link from snapping and to increase British influence was a 'steady flow of settlers' to South Africa after the war.<sup>30</sup> Amery agreed. British immigration would contribute to the future unity of South Africa.

If South African resources and agricultural possibilities are developed as they might be, there will be room for soldier settlers...all over the country who will soon help to bring a different atmosphere into place. My faith in the future is based on the fundamental belief that a great region like South Africa will inevitably develop. At each phase of development it will call for immigrants, and those immigrants will reinforce the principle of equal rights, and of South African as against purely racial patriotism.<sup>31</sup>

Afrikaner nationalism was on the ascendancy during the latter part of the war and Afrikaner race patriotism was indeed becoming an increasingly worrisome issue within the English-speaking community which put it on the defensive. Their concern stemmed from increasing demands from militant Afrikaners for independence whose achievement became a major objective of the Nationalists in 1917. Fitzpatrick explained to Amery that it was not simply the rebellion of 1914 or republicanism which bonded the Nationalist party together: it was their anti-Botha, anti-Smuts feelings which gave them common ground. Afrikaner discontent

was directed at Botha, Smuts and the SAP because they had 'given up the policy of a Dutch racial party'.<sup>32</sup>

Denying that they were attempting to swamp the Afrikaner population, many ultra-loyalists feared that the British element would itself be destroyed by these same Afrikaner supremacists if they got into power. As Crewe informed the Colonial Secretary, Walter Long, the Nationalists seemed to imagine that Afrikaner independence could be achieved using 'less dangerous methods' such as constitutional or parliamentary means rather than war or insurrection.<sup>33</sup> According to Crewe the only effective countermeasure was a steady stream of British immigrants, preferably soldiers, with assistance from the Imperial government. 'Otherwise', he lamented, 'the Britisher in S[outh] Africa whose endurance is being strained to its limits will give up hope and will gradually become absorbed or leave the country'.<sup>34</sup>

There was a sense of desperation which permeated the correspondence arriving in Britain from Unionists in South Africa throughout 1917. This was reflected by Crewe and Fitzpatrick. Crewe was not optimistic about the immediate outlook for the English in South Africa unless a racial balance was struck in their favour.

I know them [the Boers] as a people and ultimately as individuals and there is going to be no fusion of races and the Boer who has not changed in sentiment in a hundred years will not alter in another hundred. There are already a great number of Englishmen out here who look upon the future of this country as certainly Dutch with Dutch government and who unless things...improve as the result of an active policy of introducing Englishmen after the War will sell out here...<sup>35</sup>

Fitzpatrick was much more succinct. The Boer 'will tolerate us, but we must be good: They will run the country. They own it. They are it'.<sup>36</sup>

## SECTION 5.2: SOLDIER SETTLEMENT AND FREE PASSAGE 1916-22

Haggard's visit forced the South African government to start thinking about its repatriation and post-war reconstruction policies. In August 1916, the very capable and determined Minister for Lands, Hendrik Mentz, began to study in earnest the problem of post-war employment for discharged soldiers. Eager for ideas, he solicited the

views of a number of local recruiting and employment committees. Suggestions ranged from public works programmes, education and railway administration to the civil service, police, forestry, posts and telegraphs, lands and irrigation. Of those who had returned from the front preliminary indications were that an agricultural career rated highly as a post-war occupation. The problem was that it was impossible to estimate how many were interested in farming because the government had not yet initiated a statistical survey with the local recruiting committees.<sup>37</sup>

When the British government first approached South Africa in September 1916 concerning its soldier settlement plans the reply was polite but non-committal. No decision had been made, but indications were that when it was it would be strictly limited to helping South African veterans. This was confirmed in February 1917. Schreiner was informed that it was impossible for South Africa to absorb considerable numbers of immigrants after the war. Ministers claimed that to make provision for British ex-servicemen would severely tax government resources. They argued that the large supply of native labour militated against the immigration of unskilled agricultural labour. Furthermore, the very limited quantity of small allotments for men with little or no capital, was barely sufficient to meet the needs of South African veterans, and although there were vast areas of vacant Crown land, they were located in isolated and waterless regions.<sup>38</sup>

Apart from the financial and logistical questions, however, there was a more deep-seated reason for the Union government to be cautious and that was the perennial issue of the poor white, a more serious and seemingly insoluble problem. The poor white problem resurfaced as a major political issue at the beginning of 1916. A severe drought had been raging since 1912, one of the worst in living memory. Pressure grew for the government to introduce a drought relief bill, a major component of which was the development of irrigation and water conservation projects. Not only would it provide permanent relief in specific drought-stricken regions but it would give employment to whites. By August, the government decided that the drought relief schemes provided an excellent opportunity for resettling South African veterans. This immediately opened up a political Pandora's box which highlighted the worsening relations between the two white communities and demonstrated how sensitive and politically divisive the immigration issue had become.



Nationalist politicians saw the development of irrigation as the country's salvation and the solution to the poor white problem. Arguing that charity began at home, they were convinced that these schemes provided much needed employment for impoverished white South Africans and potentially formed the cornerstone to the nation's continued agricultural prosperity.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Nationalists staunchly rejected Unionist calls for overseas immigrants, and dismissed the idea of assisted passage as political immigration, the subsidised importation of the poor of overseas nations.

Unionist members were quick to point out the continual failure of government-sponsored irrigation settlements ever since the 1880s. It was 'no use going in for a policy of false economy and settling third-class people on third-class lands'. Great care had to be taken as to the type and class of settler if taxpayers' money was not to be wasted and the policy defeated. What was needed was a system of government-sponsored agricultural education.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the cure for the poor white problem was not government handouts, preferential employment and high salaries on the railways or in the civil service. Development was the answer and immigration was the key in solving the problem. Unionists argued that there were not enough whites in South Africa to develop the country, and the majority of them lacked the experience or knowledge to accomplish the task. Immigrants, on the other hand, brought skill, initiative, fresh ideas and capital.<sup>41</sup>

The debate on the settlement provisions for returned soldiers created a furore in the House of Assembly in 1917. Unionists advocated preferential and generous treatment for ex-servicemen who had seen action and wanted to farm after demobilisation. The Nationalists expressed abhorrence at the suggestion, claiming that it favoured the ex-servicemen to the detriment of the poor white. Angrily, Mentz refused to be drawn on the issue of preference. Instead, he argued that the amendment to the 1912 Land Settlement Act, which increased the range of government assistance, was to help any and all South Africans interested in farming after the war. He emphatically denied that the government contemplated any special settlement legislation for veterans. The Nationalists remained unsatisfied and unconvinced.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout 1917 and 1918 the South African government remained resolute in its determination not to introduce special soldier settlement projects or participate in an imperial free passage scheme. Schreiner reported disconsolately that the other Dominions were very

active in promoting their own schemes in Britain. He pleaded with Botha to emulate their initiative. The government was unmoved.<sup>43</sup> Nothing changed when Milner and Amery were appointed to the Colonial Office in 1919. In January the South African government informed the Colonial Office that it was not in a position to undertake any state-aided immigration of British ex-servicemen to South Africa. It repeated that it was busy investigating what could be done for its own ex-servicemen, and that it could not encourage the emigration of British ex-soldiers unless they had substantial financial means or solid offers of guaranteed employment.<sup>44</sup>

The news was disappointing but not unexpected. The Colonial Office, though aware of the delicacy of the immigration issue and the political reasons why the South Africans were never eager to discuss post-war emigration except in very general terms, continued to hope that South Africa would be able to participate more actively in the near future.<sup>45</sup> It was doubtful that this would happen. The very presence of Milner and Amery at the Colonial Office aggravated the problem. Unionists had greeted the appointments with rapture and looked forward to the prospect of a positive, determined Imperial policy in South Africa. But their presence also did much to ignite Afrikaner opposition to immigration.<sup>46</sup>

Government paralysis resulted in confusion and frustration among civil servants who found themselves lacking in clear policy directives, lines of command or resources to deal with the flood of applications that followed demobilisation. It also led private land companies and philanthropic agencies to play a much larger role in immigration matters than they would have had if Smuts, Botha's successor as Prime Minister in 1919, had carried out an aggressive immigration policy.<sup>47</sup> Led by Fitzpatrick, South African immigration enthusiasts discussed the need to establish an office in London to attract prospective settlers, preferably of the ex-officer class.<sup>48</sup> Into the breach stepped the SASIC. Phillips, who was in London doing war work for the Ministry of Munitions and the Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau, accepted the SASIC's offer of president in November 1918. The committee's first priority was to raise funds so that it could work more effectively. Phillips suggested canvassing landowning companies based in London.<sup>49</sup> The next step was to safeguard prospective settlers against exploitation by unscrupulous agents who might induce them to purchase land at exorbitant prices or under impossible conditions. In March 1919 the

SASIC outlined a series of guidelines for settlers and purchasers interested in South Africa. They ranged from pointers on title, water supply, rainfall and altitude to issues such as location, labour supply and soil type. The SASIC emphasised that it was an impartial body. 'While the committee cannot see their way to offer an opinion upon the merits or demerits of land offered to settlers or the price demanded, they are impelled to caution those who have under their consideration offers of this description not to make purchases without satisfying themselves on the following points'.<sup>50</sup>

It was sound advice because London was plagued by dubious and fraudulent South African land companies who misled prospective settlers about the quick and easy returns they could expect by farming in the Dominion. South Africa had become 'a land for large landlords', according to one commentator, a land where 'speculation is the greatest of all our industries', complained another.<sup>51</sup> The companies which gave British and South African authorities constant trouble were those involved in irrigation and citriculture. For example, Letaba Orange Estates sought to entice soldier settlers and others to the Eastern Transvaal. But the region was notorious for malaria, blackwater fever and the dreaded tsetse fly.<sup>52</sup> Zebediela Estates, another citrus venture in the same area, aroused governmental suspicions. Founded in 1917, the company was suspected of using misleading advertising and making false claims about the scale of returns settlers could make in the first years of their investment. There was a host of smaller ventures scattered throughout the Transvaal and Eastern Cape promising an excellent lifestyle, easy returns and low risks. Most were unsound and unbusinesslike, aroused unending suspicion and soon disappeared with the 1920-22 depression.<sup>53</sup>

The problem became so acute in 1919 and 1920 that Amery kept in close contact with Mentz in an attempt to clarify the situation. The Colonial Office, concerned about the effect these swindlers were having on legitimate efforts to promote land settlement and agriculture in South Africa, wanted to know what measures the Department of Lands were implementing to counteract them.<sup>54</sup> The reply was far from encouraging. Governor-General Buxton informed Amery that the hands of the South African authorities were tied because the necessary legislation did not exist to prevent these companies from operating. The government could not openly state that a specific scheme was a swindle as this laid the government open to libel charges and a great deal of bad and unwanted

publicity. It was a feeble response to a growing problem which it was unwilling or unprepared to solve. Of equal importance was the lack of suitable Crown land in South Africa to enable the government to play a major role in land development. As long as the onus remained on private enterprise the South African government was content not to interfere. But this was precisely the problem. The majority of these land selling companies were profit-making ventures. Because they were speculative investments they were rarely good settlement propositions.<sup>55</sup>

This did not mean that all private companies and projects were bogus. However, bad press generated by one or two scandals tainted the honest endeavours of others and were hard to put to rest. Buxton strongly recommended that the British government use the greatest caution when answering enquiries concerning South Africa, and make very clear to intending settlers not to purchase any land in South Africa without first examining it personally or obtaining recognised expert opinion.<sup>56</sup> Similar instructions were issued by the South African High Commission. Nevertheless, complaints about misleading information and the purchase of worthless land continued to haunt South African immigration and settlement efforts throughout the 1920s.

Meanwhile the Department of Lands was coping as best it could with domestic soldier settlement. In August 1918 Mentz was told by his officials that the question of employment of returned soldiers was proving entirely unsatisfactory. By the end of September 531 South African veterans had been placed on approximately 860,000 acres valued at £331,000.<sup>57</sup> Between 1918 and 1921 a plethora of grievances, demands and deputations requesting greater assistance for the returned man inundated the department. At the forefront was a variety of newly formed ex-servicemen's organisations who demanded a voice. They requested that a soldier representative be appointed to each provincial Land Board in order that the returned man receive a more sympathetic hearing. A number of local recruiting committees and returned soldiers' employment committees grew anxious about government policy. They complained that an increasing number of discharged ex-servicemen from the rural districts were drifting into the towns swelling the ranks of the unemployed. Most of them had been brought up on farms and were well versed in farming practices. Could not the government see fit to take immediate steps to help these men secure suitable employment in a land settlement scheme, thus relieving the burden on the towns?<sup>58</sup>

In 1920 pressure for assistance increased as the international

depression began to bite. J. Sommerville, Under Secretary for Lands, was certain that his department would receive more applications for financial assistance from prospective soldier settlers than the budget allowed.<sup>59</sup> In January 1921 the government acquiesced to demands by several veterans' organisations for a returned soldiers conference. Smuts was eager to allay the fears of many ex-servicemen and reassure them that the government was doing its utmost to help the returned man. Pension scales topped the list of priorities and it was expected that their examination would take up most of the conference's time. But the Department of Lands was aware that land settlement would play a crucial part in the remaining time allocated. There was also the problem of the press. Department officials were subsequently advised to be 'superlatively cautious', for if the position of the returned soldier with respect to land settlement was shown in 'too rosy a light' it would arouse Nationalist rebuke. The SAP was certainly not looking for another round of intense and acrimonious political wrangling involving soldier settlement and the poor white.<sup>60</sup>

The conference met in Johannesburg in May. Participants included representatives of a variety of ex-servicemen's organisations, regional advisory boards and government departments. Of the 130 resolutions passed, barely sixteen dealt with land settlement. As predicted, pension issues dominated the conference agenda. The major thrust of the settlement proposals however was veteran representation on the provincial Land Boards and the development of a national group settlement scheme.<sup>61</sup> The government accepted the resolutions, but it was clear that as far as land settlement was concerned nothing was going to be done.

In 1919 enquiries from returned soldiers interested in land settlement averaged 100 per month. Of these 10% were from men in the Witwatersrand area, 40% from other urban areas, 30% from the country and 20% from the various fronts and military hospitals in South Africa and overseas. The figures included a negligible amount from British ex-servicemen. The inquirers constituted three types: men with capital and farming experience (largely ex-officers), men with experience but little or no capital, and men with neither experience nor capital.<sup>62</sup> A large proportion of the returned soldier enquiries were from poor whites. This at least disproved the Nationalists' claim that soldiers were receiving preferential treatment when many soldiers had been poor whites prior to enlistment. Nevertheless, by March 1922 only 2,287, or

21.5% of the applications received from South African soldiers, were settled under existing legislation. By February 1923 one-sixth had cancelled, surrendered or ceded their holdings.<sup>63</sup> Ironically, South Africa received approximately three times more British ex-servicemen under the auspices of the British government's free passage scheme than it settled South African veterans under its settlement legislation. As well, many embarked upon agriculture but by-passed the Dominion government, using their own resources or the facilities of the 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association and private land companies. Nonetheless, of the Dominions, South Africa received the fewest number of British ex-servicemen and their families. Of the final total of 86,027 who participated in the imperial free passage scheme, South Africa received only 6,064 or 7%.<sup>64</sup>

Private enterprise fared no better. In 1920 the Smartt Syndicate went public in an attempt to attract settlers to the estate and reap the benefit of a post-war boom in land prices. A tremendous amount of energy and investment capital was expended to prepare the estate for an expected rush. It never materialised. Thirteen soldier settlers eventually took possession of 775 acres of irrigable land. In 1925 one-half abandoned their holdings and by 1930 not one soldier settler remained.<sup>65</sup>

Fitzpatrick's Sundays River Settlement Scheme proved equally disappointing. In 1916 the project seemed financially sound with a share capital of £200,000. Both Haggard and the outspoken Director of Irrigation, F. E. Kanthack, strongly recommended it and firmly believed that it was one of the most promising land settlement schemes in the country - a showpiece of South African initiative and ingenuity.<sup>66</sup> Eager to push ahead during the war, Fitzpatrick endeavoured to enlist the weighty financial backing of the mining interests. Otto Beit and the Central Mining and Investment Corporation declined. Although he did not want to leave an old friend in the lurch, Beit was already committed to Smartt's venture. An additional reason, according to Beit, was the unreliability of Fitzpatrick's estimates and his expectations on the initial returns. Solly Joel, the mining magnate and owner of De Beers, was more encouraging. He intimated that De Beers was prepared to buy 500 acres at £50 per acre in order to provide for the settlement of its employees who had joined the colours.<sup>67</sup>

Fitzpatrick had always expressed the need for action and planning to meet the expected rush of ex-service settlers once the war ended. In

anticipation, he reserved 2,000 acres of prepared land for fruit growing in allotments ranging in size from ten to fifty acres and offered it to both South African and British ex-servicemen at a greatly reduced price. It was a sound strategy motivated by patriotism rather than profit, but the construction of new irrigation facilities was hopelessly behind schedule limiting the numbers of men who could be absorbed immediately.<sup>68</sup>

The predicted flood of settlers never took place. By 1920 there were sixty-five overseas settlers at Sundays River, but there is no indication of how many were ex-servicemen. In 1921-22, with the start of Britain's military retrenchment and naval disarmament programme, the original group was bolstered by an unspecified number of ex-officers, largely from the Royal Navy. They were a determined, articulate and highly organised group who worked closely with Fitzpatrick to promote Sundays River and encourage brother officers to immigrate from overseas. A naval settlers committee was formed in July 1922 and an option on 1,000 acres was obtained from Fitzpatrick. Eager to promote land settlement and liaise with interested officers in Britain, the naval settlers committee proved a valuable adjunct to Fitzpatrick's efforts. In late 1922, he applauded the formation of a complementary military settlers committee established to attract similarly redundant army officers to the valley. Unfortunately, it is impossible to estimate the number of ex-service settlers at Sundays River during this time.<sup>69</sup>

Problems continued to hamper Fitzpatrick's settlement work. The construction of a large irrigation dam encountered delay and was not completed until 1922. Prosperity seemed assured, but the settlers had already experienced years of devastating drought. Even with the completion of Lake Mentz the drought persisted prolonging the settlers' suffering. Finally, in 1928 the irrigation facilities provided the settlers with the water they had been promised as early as 1918. But it was too little too late. In January 1923 the company had been forced into liquidation by the government who took control of the project.<sup>70</sup>

### SECTION 5.3: SMUTS AND A BELATED ATTEMPT AT A POLICY

In January 1921 the South African government launched a publicity campaign in London to attract prospective agricultural settlers with a minimum of £1,000 capital. Why the apparent and sudden shift in policy?

Its implementation must be seen within the background of the merger between the Unionists and SAP the previous November and the general election scheduled for February 1921. Smuts, preoccupied with international events and policy making, had never paid much attention to the immigration issue. But with a critical election in the offing he realised that a positive move in this direction would earn him greater credibility with his new party allies and galvanise their support behind him. The publicity campaign's primary aim was to attract the attention of retiring officers who upon discharge were entitled to a substantial compensatory gratuity. Some leading Unionists were encouraged by Smuts's initiative and saw the publicity campaign as a step in the right direction and a sign of positive state intervention. Writing before the February election, Lionel Phillips, a former Unionist, was hopeful that a victory for Smuts was a victory for the immigration lobby. He was certain that Smuts would be more sympathetic, if not more forthcoming with active government assistance.<sup>71</sup>

The embarrassing picture painted by Kanthack and others certainly aroused the Union government to the state of affairs which existed in its London operation. Despite the disappointing news and the procedural problems, according to the High Commission, there was still a strong interest in Britain about agricultural opportunities in South Africa. There was a real possibility that South Africa could compete with its better organised Commonwealth cousins for specific types of settlers if it really wanted to. But Walton warned that, although public attention in Britain was 'rivetted' to the Union, the publicity campaign was useless in the absence of settler support which included immigrant reception facilities and training programmes.

A positive step was taken in May with the appointment to the High Commission of Dirk Boshoff, the former inspector of settlements with the Department of Lands, as a settlers' information, land and agricultural officer.<sup>72</sup> The publicity campaign, however, was a limited success. It attracted a number of ex-officers with capital, the majority of whom wanted to pursue agriculture. Unfortunately for the government the overall numbers were small. In the first year of operation 244 men were encouraged to emigrate to South Africa bringing with them on average £6,000 each for a total of £1.6 million. By the end of March 1923, an unspecified number of settlers had taken approximately £4 million in investment capital to their new home. Boshoff, however, was far from satisfied. He argued that a great deal more could be accomplished if 'a



bolder more progressive immigration policy were adopted...with better organisation in South Africa'.<sup>73</sup> The lack of proper facilities to train and guide settlers in South Africa jeopardised the encouraging results being achieved in London. The situation was not helped by the persistent and harmful rumours about unscrupulous land companies. Boshoff also complained that he was continually hampered by poor and irregular supplies of settlement material.<sup>74</sup>

Boshoff's advice and pleas were ignored. When he returned to South Africa in January 1924 he pointed out that after two-and-a-half years he had sent out 1,000 British families to South Africa with an estimated capital reserve of £6 million. However, he was unsure of the consequences for South Africa. He noted that the government's minimum capital requirement introduced investors rather than farmers. The candidates may have had more than the £1,000 to £2,000 required, but they had little or no farming experience compared to those who had the experience but less capital. As far as he was concerned, the only organisation which was doing anything constructive for the settler was the 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association.<sup>75</sup>

#### SECTION 5.4: THE 1820 MEMORIAL SETTLERS' ASSOCIATION

The founding in 1920 of the 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association marked a new chapter in British immigration to South Africa. It was founded, in part, to commemorate the centenary of the landing of the 3,500 British settlers at Algoa Bay in the Eastern Cape. The Association boasted that it could offer to those who had served during the war an opportunity of starting a new and productive life in a country which possessed vast agricultural, industrial and economic potential.<sup>76</sup> Its real objective, however, was to restore British immigration to South Africa in an attempt to reinforce the English-speaking community. In that respect, it was an adjunct of Unionist party policy.

The first decade of the Association's history was spent catering to the half-pay officer and the British public school boy. It was a highly selective, socially exclusive policy and one which received its share of criticism. The Association attempted to attract men with capital 'represented either by money or training'.<sup>77</sup> Preference was given to settlers who had already secured a rudimentary education in

animal husbandry and agricultural science. However, the Association also clearly stipulated that single men were required to possess a minimum of £1,500 capital prior to emigrating and £2,000 was fixed for married men. These financial qualifications were above the minimum capital required by the government. According to the Association, a higher minimum requirement was necessary to ensure success. It certainly was a more realistic figure considering the enormous expense incurred by settlers in adapting to new environmental conditions and farming practices.<sup>78</sup>

The Association's major objectives were governmental and popular support, settlers of the 'right sort' and financial solvency. The most immediate problem facing the fledgling movement was to enlist support, and Sir Charles Crewe, the Association's first chairman between 1920 and 1934, wasted no time. Within the first year he compiled an impressive list of honorary vice-presidents encompassing (with the exception of Hertzog's Nationalists) many within the mainstream of the political spectrum in South Africa.<sup>79</sup> It was no surprise that Milner was offered and accepted the title of honorary president. Milner applauded Crewe's initiative but warned that the road ahead would be unyielding and the task a thankless one. 'I have no doubt', he told Crewe, 'British loyalists will have to continue to do all the work, and get few of the rewards. I am sure, by the way, that it is by your plan of quietly but steadily introducing men [of] good British blood that the position can alone be consolidated'.<sup>80</sup>

When Crewe solicited support from Merriman he revealed his intense desire to 'get together a really live body and get the ear of the Colonial Office' in London. This achievement would enable the Association 'not only to get...settlers but prevent exploitation by bogus [and] impossible schemes'.<sup>81</sup> However, the Association would 'rigidly abstain [from] embarking on any policy of land purchase for Settlement purposes'. Its primary concern was the scientific and 'systematic introduction of the old strain of British blood on a scale which [would] ensure the predominance of the white race' in South Africa.<sup>82</sup> Crewe, in extending an invitation to the OSC to attend the inaugural meeting of the London committee in August 1920, emphasised that the Association was 'neither political nor racial and presents an opportunity of assisting settlement in South Africa, which is not likely to occur again'.<sup>83</sup>

The active participation in the Association of many former

Milnerites and Unionist politicians from Smuts's English-speaking phalanx within the SAP after the party merger in November 1920, raised an additional problem. Although the Association's leaders stressed that their organisation was non-racial and apolitical these claims were dismissed by the Afrikaner community. Instead, Nationalists charged that the Association was indeed trying to contain the Afrikaner by promoting British immigration. In fact, some Unionists took a more defensive view. The only salvation for a British South Africa was the maintenance of the political status quo between the two white communities. A steady and constant flow of British immigrants to South Africa would ensure a numerical balance between the two white races.

Initially, the applicants were largely ex-officers who possessed some capital and were interested in farming. Many settlers in this class had possessed a farm prior to leaving the mother-country.<sup>84</sup> But Smartt, the Minister of Agriculture, agreed with Sir Edgar Walton, a leading Unionist and Schreiner's successor as High Commissioner, that these same British officers held many misconceptions about farming in South Africa. They seemed 'to imagine that stepping out of the Army and onto a farm is an easy process, whereas it is one that requires extremely close attention to nature and a good deal of hard work'.<sup>85</sup> Smartt argued that it would be better to have young experienced farmers with £600 than the inexperienced farmer with £1,500: 'Knowledge [and experience with] farm life would be likely to do better than a man with four times the amount who might be inclined to imagine farming was a life of ease, enlivened by sounds of sport'.<sup>86</sup>

The highly selective policy of the Association contained important social overtones. The enormous supply of cheap black labour ensured that white agricultural labour could not compete on the same level. The emphasis was on the settler with capital who could establish himself as a gentleman farmer. At the same time an English farmer could not go to South Africa and 'think that he could simply walk around and leave all the dirty work to be done by natives', warned the Earl of Leven and Melville, a member of the London executive.<sup>87</sup> Phillips similarly emphasised that discipline, respect, hard work and deference to one's place in society were vital qualities which had to be instilled into the native. Therefore it was essential to secure 'people of gentle breeding for the influence they [would] gradually exercise upon the native mind'.<sup>88</sup>

The maintenance of a social balance between the black and white

racism was believed to be essential for the Union's future social stability. The role of the native as the unskilled labourer and the dour, paternalistic white landowner as master remained a dominant theme in the social attitudes of the white South African farming community. And baaskap was not an Afrikaner monopoly in light of the class of immigrant the Association was hoping to attract.<sup>89</sup> However, the achievement of social stability also included striking a balance between the rural and urban communities. 'Domestic stability within the Union cannot be expected unless the normal unrest of industrial workers can be "ballasted" by a large stable agricultural population' preferably of Anglo-Saxon stock.<sup>90</sup> This was the motive for the Association's determination to resettle British ex-officers in rural South Africa: social, racial and political stability.

Crewe's attempt to gain a sympathetic ear at the Colonial Office proved successful. Amery was delighted, welcomed the invitation and raised no objections for closer cooperation with the organisation. However, the Colonial Office made it clear that its participation would be in an advisory capacity only.<sup>91</sup> Participation in an executive or administrative capacity was out of the question, as it contravened Colonial Office policy regarding voluntary agencies. The function of the Association as an 'honest broker' increased in importance, however, as it became clear to the Colonial Office that the political implications of British immigration to South Africa made it impossible for South Africa to participate officially in the imperial migration schemes which had caught the rest of the empire's imagination.<sup>92</sup> This importance was not lost on South African authorities either.

The Association and the South African High Commission in London soon developed a harmonious and intimate working relationship. Part of the reason was the close personal friendship of Phillips, Schreiner and Walton and their commitment to sending the right type of settler to South Africa. Smartt, as Minister of Agriculture, provided an additional link in the network of influential and strategically placed personalities. He admitted that so far as the South African government was concerned, the Association was the most competent body to deal with prospective settlers. '[T]o have an organised body of disinterested people looking after settlers and seeing that they are not fleeced by designing speculators' was vital.<sup>93</sup>

The Association worked hard to maintain an untarnished reputation. The decision not to become involved in realty or land speculation was a

conscious step designed to give the Association greater flexibility and influence within government circles. Its voluntary nature, integrity, emphasis on sound advice and assistance rather than booking fees, commissions and land sales, elevated it above official reproach. Enquiries received by the OSC concerning the standard of living in South Africa, employment prospects, agricultural potential and opportunities, and the cost of passages were either forwarded directly to the London executive or via the South African High Commission. Although the High Commission had the final word on the suitability of a settler and was responsible for screening and approving his application, the High Commission lacked the facilities to cope with large numbers of enquiries. Therefore, it resorted to sending information enquiries directly to the Association. Even when a more vigorous Union government policy was initiated in London in January 1921 the High Commission preferred to work closely with the Association because of its reputation and experience.

Such a privileged position, however, exposed the Association to ridicule and attack from several private South African land settlement and colonisation companies jealous of its status. Charges of favouritism were levelled by some companies who complained that the Association basked in the 'sunshine of official recognition' and used its privileged position to steer settlers away from those private operations it deemed unsafe.<sup>94</sup> There was a grain of truth to these charges, but the Association had taken it upon itself to act as an immigration watch-dog. Complaints about misleading information and the purchase of worthless land continued to plague the Association's efforts. This prompted the Association to monitor closely the activities of these companies in London and their operations in South Africa to ensure that any complaints about one company did not damage the honest and competent work of others. Similarly, Phillips emphasised that settlers brought out under the auspices of the Association must be supervised closely during their probationary period.

In a movement of this kind considerable damage may result from reports spread by dissatisfied Settlers. To avert that, therefore, we must be active in enquiring into any complaints that arise, so that, if well-founded, we can see them remedied, and if not well-founded have the ammunition ready to scotch misrepresentations directly [as] they come to our notice.<sup>95</sup>

It was obvious from the very beginning that the requisite capital stipulation would hinder the overall numbers wanting to go to South Africa. Phillips reported from London that his committee was being inundated with enquiries, but it was not easy to get applicants who met the financial conditions.<sup>96</sup> Walton substantiated Phillips's claim that the Association would have no difficulty whatsoever getting large numbers of young ex-officer settlers if the monetary conditions were lowered. He informed Crewe that with the cutbacks in British military spending thousands of officers were being made redundant. Unfortunately, according to Walton, the majority had little or no means of making a new start.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, all three men agreed that to lower the financial conditions just as the depression was at its worst would be fatal to the settler and the Association.

India provided a partial solution. The British government, as part of its economy drive, decided to pare down its military commitment in India. The services of 2,400 Indian Army officers, the majority between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-eight, were to be terminated at the end of 1921. As very few would be absorbed into the Indian civil service, the India Office's attention was drawn to the immigration operations of the Association. It wanted to know the minimum capital requirement as most of the officers were likely to receive compensatory gratuities of between £1,000 and £2,000. It also tried to impress upon all the Dominions the urgency of the situation and advised them to open temporary offices in Bombay to disseminate reliable farming information. Walton was eager to act as he was certain that South Africa's rivals were already in the field. A shortage of funds prevented the South African government from establishing a Bombay office. In actual fact, it was a convenient excuse used by the South African authorities who really had no intention of participating.<sup>98</sup> The Association were of a different mind.

Phillips was confident that there were a good number of ex-officers in India eager to settle in South Africa. He told Crewe that the 'military officer who goes to India is as a rule a very serious type of man and is likely to make an excellent settler'.<sup>99</sup> They most certainly had the experience necessary to deal with the native and were seasoned to a range of hostile climates similar to South Africa's. Crewe needed no convincing. At the Indian government's invitation he despatched in December 1921 Colonel G. Morris, the Association's general manager and secretary, who received the full cooperation of both the

Indian military and civilian authorities.<sup>100</sup>

Morris succeeded in establishing temporary offices in Delhi and Simla but it is unclear how many ex-Indian officers and civil servants actually emigrated to South Africa under the advice of the Association. It is also unclear how long the Association kept its India operations alive. A liberal estimate puts it at no more than four years as the numbers of ex-officers dried up by 1925. The Association certainly competed against several Australian interests for military settlers. And it was not the only South African interest operating in India. As early as 1916, Fitzpatrick had combined settlement work with business during visits to the sub-continent.<sup>101</sup>

The Association's ability to attract settlers was based indirectly on its ability to raise funds. Crewe's threefold financial strategy was based on the necessity to get as broad a basis of support as possible from which he could tap the required operating capital of £250,000. Large corporations and trust companies in Britain and South Africa were approached for large contributions. One hundred leading individuals and middle ranking firms were also solicited for funds. The remainder was sought in the form of donations, subscriptions and memberships from businessmen, farmers and others interested in promoting British immigration to, and land settlement in, South Africa. Crewe was confident, despite the onset of the depression, that the financial target would be made. And he assured Phillips that active and vital support from the English-speaking South African farming community was ensuring a constant supply of funds.<sup>102</sup>

Phillips agreed that it was critical to establish an adequate annual income but he was hesitant about Crewe's cheery financial forecast. He was acutely aware that the Association derived its funds from those who were ardent supporters of empire. 'It is only a question of enthusiasm on the part of those of us who are fostering this movement for it to grow in importance'. The success of the Association depended as much on organisation as it did on rallying, combining and tapping these patriotic sources simply for money.<sup>103</sup> The determined Crewe seemed to ignore this sound advice and confided to Lady Violet Milner that so far as he was concerned, 'the money part is not difficult, the propaganda is what is most needed'.<sup>104</sup> An energetic and well orchestrated publicity campaign would attract the necessary financial and popular support. Phillips strongly disagreed. 'The times are unpropitious for getting large donations', he cautioned in 1923, as it

was 'quite fruitless' to try and get money in England. The bleak domestic economic picture after the depression set in during 1920 meant that 'purse strings [were] tightly laced and knotted'.<sup>105</sup> His warnings proved correct. Efforts to raise money and keep the London committee operating became desperate. Crewe monitored the situation closely and was prepared to dip into the Cape Town area funds if required. Nonetheless, the situation remained acute over the summer. In addition, the London executive experienced organisational problems which were affecting its performance. A complete reorganisation was needed.<sup>106</sup>

#### SECTION 5.5: A NEW ALLIANCE

The persistent shortage of operating capital in London was solved in August 1923. Under the terms of the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, enacted to promote and assist British emigration within the empire, the British government was entitled to negotiate settlement agreements with both public and private bodies. As a result, Crewe negotiated an agreement with the British government whereby a capitation grant of £10 per settler, or per head of household in the case of families, would be paid to the Association. Payments were spread over two years. The entire scheme was to be administered for five years and was not to exceed £10,000 per annum. The London executive was convinced that this grant would enable them to meet their operating expenses and maintain an active propaganda campaign to attract more settlers. Quite simply, more settlers meant more grant money. Provided that the Association could find the settlers, it now had a guaranteed supply of money to prime the propaganda pump.<sup>107</sup>

Supplementary agreements were signed over the next three years. In August 1925 the grant was increased to £16 although the Association asked for £20. In May 1926 the instalments were made yearly rather than quarterly. In order to enhance responsible financial management, the Treasury insisted that the Association provide up-to-date statements of expenditure. The Treasury considered the Association a responsible organisation but at the same time it disliked its slow and somewhat backward annual accounts procedure. With the annual call for money after 1923 the Treasury began to question more seriously the London executive's financial practices and acumen. By 1926 one Treasury



official saw the agreements as simply a stop-gap measure employed by the Association to solve its ever worsening cash flow problem. The Colonial Office was quick to point out, however, that the Association had spent £70,000 in the promotion of British settlement between 1920 and 1926 whereas the British government had contributed to the Association a mere £2,500 in subsidy grants. It was therefore inadvisable to quibble about procedure. The Treasury relented, agreeing with the Colonial Office that the task being met by the Association was, politically speaking, one of the most important in the empire.<sup>108</sup>

However, declining numbers of settlers forced a re-negotiation of the capitation grant in 1928. The British government decided to return to the 1923 sum of £10 and payments were spread over a three-year period. The Association complained that the reduction would seriously affect their London operations. As a concession, the British government agreed to contribute half the London executive's administrative costs including publicity, but placed a ceiling of £2,500 per year.<sup>109</sup> The Association seemed finally to have found firm financial ground.

The British government's involvement went further than funding the Association's London operation and demonstrates its commitment to promoting British immigration to South Africa. During the 1923 Imperial Economic Conference preliminary negotiations between British and South African representatives were initiated regarding the settlement of 1,500 British public school boys in South Africa. The British government would provide advances of £300 per settler to a maximum of 500 boys a year for three years. The advances were aimed at helping prospective settlers who did not meet the South African government's initial capital requirement but did have between £500 and £1,500. Candidates had to pay their own passage. Once in South Africa they had to enrol at one of the government's agricultural training schools and provide for their own tuition and upkeep. Upon completion of their training they were eligible for additional grants from the South African government. Under existing legislation, grants were provided amounting to four-fifths the purchase price of land together with certain advances on stock and equipment purchases. Debt losses would be shared by both governments. Interest was not to exceed 5% with repayments scheduled over a period of thirty to forty years. Settler selection was to be arranged by the South African government through the Association in London.<sup>110</sup>

Surprisingly, the Treasury kept relatively quiet apart from their usual questions concerning margins of security. The Treasury official,

Sir Otto Niemeyer, argued that because the subsidy would not affect the general flow of British migration to South Africa it was better to endorse the scheme. For him, it was the less expensive option. To create a disturbance at the conference over a small and seemingly innocuous subsidy might alert the other Dominions to demand even greater settler subsidies and that had to be prevented. Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, concurred.<sup>111</sup> Bankes Amery, the OSC's financial officer, urged his Colonial Office and Treasury colleagues to deal generously with the South Africans and not adhere too closely to the ordinary financial guidelines. The value of British settlers in South Africa was of much greater importance to the empire 'and...we should be cheerfully prepared to face possible losses in some cases in the general interests of introducing men of the right sort into South Africa'.<sup>112</sup> Throughout November and December 1923 the proposals were redrafted and refined, but Smuts refused to sign any formal agreement. The problem remained the political sensitivity of the issue. He suggested that an exchange of letters between the two governments was more convenient, would avoid publicity and Nationalist reproach. Such a procedure was legal and equally binding under the provisions of the Empire Settlement Act. The Colonial Office was sympathetic and saw no objection to the procedure.<sup>113</sup>

Crewe, however, was disappointed and worried. He pointed out to H. Handcock, secretary of the London executive, that a formal agreement would have bound successive South African governments to honour the scheme. Despite the political fracas that would no doubt ensue, the formal agreement would have given settlement in South Africa the long-term financial stability it so badly needed. An exchange of letters would be binding only with Smuts's administration. Under the present agreement the danger was that if after the Association accepted the settlers, the government changed and the subsidies were not forthcoming, the settlers would suffer and the Association would be held responsible. Crewe was anxious to avoid such a situation because it held the potential of damaging irretrievably British settlement in South Africa.<sup>114</sup>

Although the Treasury succumbed to the idea that an exchange of letters was acceptable, Prime Minister Baldwin's defeat by Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour Party in January 1924, and Smuts's electoral defeat five months later, left everything in limbo. The importance of this episode was threefold. First, the negotiations demonstrated both

the delicacy and the awkwardness with which South African domestic politics complicated the immigration and settlement issues. Secondly, it demonstrated how far the Colonial Office was prepared to go to accommodate and promote British immigration to and land settlement in South Africa. Finally, it highlighted and reinforced the central position occupied by the Association as the broker between the two governments which had important ramifications for the rest of the decade.

When Baldwin returned to power in November 1924 the question of settler advances was refloated. Hertzog's election made it impossible for the British government to strike any kind of agreement with the South African government. What if the settler advances were distributed through the Association rather than official channels? There was no problem using this approach under the terms of the Empire Settlement Act because the British government could cooperate with both public and private bodies to promote emigration. The entire administrative procedure and the security on the loans would be the sole responsibility of the Association. The Treasury raised no objections, but in the interests of financial security it insisted that a third party be installed as the financial agent through which settler advances were distributed. This guaranteed better management, improved channels of communication and above all protected British interests.<sup>115</sup>

An agreement was struck in August 1925 between the British government, the Association and the Standard Bank of South Africa. Each settler was entitled to advances to a maximum of £600 to be repaid over a fifteen year period at the market rate of interest. The advances were to be used to purchase land, buildings, stock, furniture and equipment. The Standard Bank acted as the lending agency through which the money was exchanged between the Association and the British government. To ensure that the money was being spent properly the bank had to provide detailed quarterly financial statements to the OSC. In turn, the Association was obliged to present statements of account detailing items of expenditure. The scheme was to run for ten years and expenditure was not to exceed the aggregate sum of £200,000.<sup>116</sup>

## SECTION 5.6: THE ELECTION OF THE PACT GOVERNMENT

The year 1924 was crucial for the Association's immigration and settlement strategy. As we have seen, the depression had made fund raising a difficult task for many local and several area branches. Funds were also drying up in Britain as were the numbers of prospective settlers who could meet the £1,500 capital requirement. Reorganisation, therefore, became a priority with the Association at the end of 1924. Similarly, a large number of settlers were finding farming conditions much more of a challenge than anticipated and lodged complaints with the South African government about the high prices charged for land, stock and implements. The Association had always been aware of this dilemma and recognised that part of the problem was that many settlers lacked proper training and supervision. The government had offered positions on its agricultural training farms but the vacancies were few.<sup>117</sup> The Association decided that the establishment of several training farms, sponsored and administered under its authority, would not only alleviate the present situation but would go a long way to increasing and maintaining the flow of settlers. It proved to be an imaginative but a fatally expensive departure.

Of greater significance, however, was Smuts's defeat by Hertzog's Nationalists and their coalition or pact partners, the South African Labour Party, in June 1924. Smuts had proven ineffective in combatting the problems brought about by the post-war depression. While unemployment and poor whiteism had grown at a phenomenal rate he launched his campaign aimed at accomplishing three objectives. Topping the list was the increased use of the country's natural resources through a greater utilisation of its agricultural potential. The introduction of European settlers and the improvement of the condition of the poor whites completed the election platform. These were sound objectives but the conditions required for their achievement were lacking. Depressed markets for primary produce, low prices and a three-year drought had certainly not helped farmers. Money was needed to educate and assist the poor white, but local authorities were hard pressed to meet their commitments. Unemployment was so severe that many South Africans were leaving the country to find work. In the circumstances what chance did an immigrant have of finding a job?<sup>118</sup>

Smuts's electoral agenda, in particular his immigration policy,

exposed him to violent Nationalist and Labour attacks and strengthened their cries for a domestic resettlement policy. But the greatest single event which led to his defeat was his mishandling of the Rand strike of 1922. Smuts used extremely repressive methods to quash the miners strike which associated him with big business. It was this association and the government's poor economic record which the opposition used with great effect.<sup>119</sup> Almost immediately, the SAP defeat cast immigration in a wholly pessimistic light.

The political situation in South Africa between 1925 and 1928 deterred many British immigrants from making the Dominion their home. When Hertzog came to power elements within the British government and their English-speaking allies in South Africa feared that the Nationalists intended to declare South Africa a republic and secede from the empire.<sup>120</sup> Whether he intended to take South Africa out of the empire or was in a position to do so remains a matter for conjecture.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, Hertzog was determined at the forthcoming Imperial conference in late 1926 to hammer out an agreement which clearly defined Dominion status thus eliminating the frustrating ambiguity about the Dominions' international standing.

Meanwhile, the controversy that burst open the old racial wounds between English and Afrikaner was the Nationality and Flag Bill first tabled in May 1926. The controversy centred upon the Union government's proposal to adopt a flag that contained neither the Union Jack nor the former republican colours. An enormous row ensued as the Opposition immediately concluded that this implied secession. The matter was deferred until 1927. When re-introduced the feathers flew once more. A compromise was eventually reached after private talks between Smuts and Hertzog whereby both the old flags would be incorporated into the new one.<sup>122</sup> But the damage had been done. The issue had rekindled the fires of race patriotism at a critical time when the Association was desperately trying to reorganise its resources and tap new sources of British immigrants.

The Colonial Office was convinced that any negotiations concerning South African settlement schemes and settler subsidies would be held in abeyance for the time being. For the moment it was Africa for the Afrikaner, the Colonial Office being warned that it should not expect sympathy or assistance from the new government in immigration matters. In the meantime the only hope was for the Colonial Office to continue working through the Association until Smuts regained power.<sup>123</sup>

For Crewe and his associates it seemed that their worst fears had been realised. The poor white problem would receive Hertzog's undivided attention to the further detriment of the immigration cause in South Africa. Phillips, however, struck a note of cautious optimism.

I quite understand that the Nationalist Government, for political reasons of its own, is not inclined to take a very open attitude regarding the encouragement of British settlers. At the same time, it cannot be oblivious to the danger to white civilisation in South Africa unless the stream of white emigration can be strengthened. Moreover, the Nationalist Government cannot be blind to the folly of attempting to re-establish the "poor whites" on the land, though they must, of course, for political purposes advocate and perhaps support schemes with the object in view, even with their tongues in their cheeks! But, unless they are very ill-informed, they must also know...that it is the active Englishmen and the up-to-date European who have done the development up to now and in whom the hope of the future lies. It is of course very difficult for any of us to gauge the true mentality of the Boer: it is right to say that he has really no confirmed convictions and pursues a day to day policy according to the expediency of the moment.<sup>124</sup>

Undaunted, Crewe battled on. He set about reorganising and reinvigorating the Transvaal, Natal and London executives. He reported to Lady Milner that the settlement work was progressing 'swimmingly' despite the Pact government's legislation to facilitate the rehabilitation of the poor white. And he praised her involvement in the Association and the wonderful work her sub-committee in London was accomplishing. '[A]t last there is real life in the work in London'.<sup>125</sup>

Both Crewe and the British government remained unconvinced of the Pact government's sincerity to help the overseas immigrant as outlined in the Land Settlement Laws Further Amendment Bill of 1925. The Earl of Athlone, the newly appointed Governor-General, reported to the Colonial Office that the legislation at first glance appeared to indicate that the Nationalists were no longer opposed to immigration from overseas. However this was not the case. The legislation was introduced to 'facilitate the rehabilitation of the 'poor white' on the land which the government hold to be the true solution of that problem'.<sup>126</sup> Crewe's appraisal was more blunt: 'Hertzog is struggling [and] he knows that putting the poor whites back on the land is no real solution of that question, they won't make farmers in the days of competition, but he does it for political reasons'.<sup>127</sup>

Crewe's assessment was correct. The new South African government had no intention of embarking upon an intensive immigration policy in Europe. 'As state-aided immigration has never formed part of our policy', stated C. I. Pienaar, South African Commissioner for Commerce in Milan, 'I presume there is no intention on the part of the state to undertake any intensive immigration campaign'.<sup>128</sup> There was not. Also, the close working relationship between the Association and the High Commission in London suddenly but not unexpectedly came to an end upon Walton's resignation as High Commissioner in 1925. He was replaced by the aggressive Nationalist, J. S. Smit. The London executive was prepared to cooperate with the new High Commissioner, but Crewe was adamant that it was better not to have any contact with him whatsoever. Quite simply, he did not trust Smit or his new personnel. Neither did R. A. Blankenburg, a long-serving member of the High Commission staff and an important link between the High Commission and the Association. Becoming annoyed with the office under Smit, he resigned in early 1926.<sup>129</sup>

However, the Association still had a friend in Amery who had returned as Colonial Secretary in Baldwin's Conservative government in November 1924. Although concerned about the new outlook in South Africa and its bearing on the Association, he remained 'cautiously optimistic' about British immigration to South Africa.<sup>130</sup> Above all, he was determined to advance the cause of British immigration to South Africa through the machinery of the Empire Settlement Act. He praised the Association's settlement work as the 'most hopeful thing being done in South Africa at this moment'.<sup>131</sup>

#### SECTION 5.7: TRAINING THE YEOMAN FARMER

The idea that the Association establish its own training farm received a great deal of support within its executive throughout 1924. The decision to do so was taken for a variety of reasons. When the Association was first conceived the executive decided that it was easier and cheaper for the settler to train with experienced local farmers. The government agricultural colleges and training farms were too small and inadequate to handle the numbers contemplated by the Association. A list of 600 farmers prepared to assist the Association was quickly compiled, but in June 1925 Crewe reported that the few remaining offers

would be filled by the end of the year. A more permanent facility such as a training farm managed and financed by the Association was needed.

Closely interwoven with the need for a training farm was the serious problem that the Association's pool of settlers was drying up. Between 1921 and 1924 the largest number of its settlers were drawn from the wealthier sections of the ex-officer class. By 1925 this source was exhausted and a new one had to be found. Young men from well-to-do British families provided a possible solution. Crewe had been thinking about this for some time and the failure of the public schoolboy scheme in 1923-24 may have been a contributory factor in the decision to start a training farm. These young men possessed the same social values, educational requirements, and to a limited extent, similar financial resources as the ex-officers. However, they lacked agricultural experience and discipline.

Plans were drafted in 1925 for the creation of a training farm at Tarka Bridge near Cradock in the Eastern Cape. The farm would cater to the settler who possessed £800 and would rely heavily upon the British public school element. Once established 'we shall be able to deal more easily with the younger people who have not arrived at that stage of commonsense which is necessary if one is to begin farming, and who require a little discipline'.<sup>132</sup> The farm would not only provide valuable experience and tuition in South African farming methods, but more importantly it would build character, foster discipline and develop an appreciation for hard work. Smartt applauded the move and agreed that these attributes were vital for young yeoman farmers, particularly those drawn from a milieu given to a life of sport and leisure. They would have to learn to work hard and not leave everything to the native servants if they expected to make a success. To ensure this no native labour was employed.<sup>133</sup>

In 1925 the Association purchased Tarka Bridge for £6,500 and negotiated a second property in the Northern Transvaal. Eager to attract subsidisation from the Imperial government, Crewe proposed in May 1925 that it cooperate with the Association on a pound for pound basis and bear half the cost of the equipment to a maximum of £3,000 for both farms. The Colonial Office was receptive and in July an agreement was struck between the two parties. The Association was responsible for the cost of upkeep, training and management. The settler paid only for his food and lodging while training, and the financial arrangements were exactly those outlined by Crewe in May.<sup>134</sup>



Tarka Bridge began operation in January, but was not officially opened until March 1926. It was an immediate success. All training was of a practical nature, supplemented by lectures and demonstrations given by members of staff and officials from the Department of Agriculture. Instruction was given in dairy farming, pig, sheep and poultry rearing, horticulture, irrigation and general farm maintenance. But the farm was not just an instructional facility. It was a demonstration farm for the entire area. Each candidate remained in the training programme for at least one year before making his own start. Crewe boasted that the twelve, later twenty students, could easily be doubled and accommodated. By June the centre was full and in November Crewe expressed the need for expansion. 'Our future seems to me bound up in more [and] more accommodation for settlers at our training farms'.<sup>135</sup>

In the Transvaal the purchase and establishment in August 1926 of the Robian training farm north of Pretoria did not proceed as smoothly. Robian was intended to serve an equally challenging purpose. It was aimed at training the young, single, practical man of the yeoman farmer type who possessed £600 capital. The idea was to teach the new settlers techniques in irrigation and dry land farming. Each candidate was granted a lease of eighty to ninety acres which he had to work himself for one year under the supervision of the farm manager. The scheme was quickly abandoned as the candidates failed to adapt to the system. Instead, Robian reverted to the training methods practised at Tarka Bridge.<sup>136</sup> Another problem was money. The Transvaal committee had none, the outfitting of the farm proved expensive, only a handful of settlers were attracted to Robian; Crewe was unsure if the Association's bankers in the Transvaal would agree to additional financing to rectify the problem. Also, Crewe could no longer rely upon the generosity of Phillips and his financial connections at the Central Mining and Investment Corporation. Phillips had resigned as corporation chairman at the end of 1924, and Crewe complained that the new management's attitude toward the Association was lukewarm. In the end, the central executive took control of the Transvaal training farm at a cost of £5,000.<sup>137</sup>

Never content to stand still, Crewe wanted to establish a third training farm in Natal at Nels Rust south of Pietermaritzburg. But Natal proved equally troublesome. Its executive never had the energy or enthusiasm of the other area executives, and Crewe was constantly trying to reorganise and inject new energy into its membership. He had hoped

to begin operations in 1926, however obligations at Tarka Bridge and the muddle in the Transvaal forced him to delay his plans until 1927.<sup>138</sup>

The expense of outfitting Tarka Bridge and Robian was seriously underestimated by the Association. A total of £12,000 was expended on equipment, forcing the Association to seek additional financial support from the Imperial government. The London executive was confident that the OSC would be amenable to its request. It was the Treasury that worried them. In September 1926 they approached the OSC for a revised agreement. The British government consented to pay half the cost of equipment for the three farms provided the total did not exceed £3,500 per farm or £9,000 in all. The agreement was negotiated for two years.<sup>139</sup> In 1928 the Association received additional funding from the British government. Arrangements were made whereby half of all the instructors' salaries were subsidised provided the cost did not exceed £1,700 per annum. This and the equipment subsidisation agreement remained in force in one form or another until World War II.<sup>140</sup>

The Association's ability to tap the British government for a variety of subsidies demonstrated the British government's commitment to bolster British immigration to South Africa. No other private immigration body in any Dominion experienced the degree and variety of funding enjoyed by the Association. As one Colonial Office official succinctly put it, 'I imagine that if it were not for the outstanding political importance of maintaining and increasing British settlement in South Africa, this Association would be no better off financially than any other'.<sup>141</sup> There were serious problems, however.

Despite British generosity, the training farms were plagued by rising costs, declining numbers of settlers and poor management. Increased expenses and dwindling resources forced the Association to abandon plans of establishing a training farm in Natal. In October 1928 Crewe reported to Lady Milner that losses of £3,000 per annum were being experienced at both Tarka Bridge and Robian. For example, it was costing more to feed the twenty to twenty-five trainees at Tarka Bridge than it was to feed the 110 students at the nearby grammar school in Grahamstown. Expenditure at Tarka Bridge was cut in half and the annual deficit at both farms slashed by £1,000 a year.<sup>142</sup>

Robian continued to run up a heavy deficit and in December 1930 the Association closed it down. The persistent drought was one factor which led to the farm's closure. Consistently poor harvests and low returns failed to offset the farm's rising overhead costs. Declining

numbers of interested settlers was another contributory factor. There were only six settlers at Robian during the 1928-29 fiscal year, which hardly justified the expenditure of thousands of pounds of capital which could be utilised elsewhere.<sup>143</sup> The problem of attracting suitable settlers to the training farms was a costly and serious setback for the Association. When the idea of training facilities was first floated, Crewe was confident that the Association could train 200 settlers annually. This was an extremely optimistic target. At its peak the combined figure for the two farms was ninety-one trainees.<sup>144</sup> The training farms proved to be a valiant but costly endeavour which despite British subsidisation drained the Association's limited financial resources. 'Work like this was very costly', confessed the Association in 1930, 'as training farms never paid'.<sup>145</sup>

The years 1927 and 1928 witnessed a slump in the number of British immigrants arriving in South Africa. A drought of unprecedented proportions was ravaging South Africa and the domestic political scene was in turmoil, 'which had the effect of turning the thoughts of intending settlers to other parts of the Empire'.<sup>146</sup> The prime need was a determined publicity campaign designed to tap new sources of immigrants and counter the harmful effects of South Africa's turbulent political scene and persistent drought. Crewe made the appeal for an aggressive campaign during a visit to London in July 1927.<sup>147</sup> In Britain, the Association relied on Geoffrey Dawson, a member of the London executive, former member of Milner's reconstruction government and editor of The Times. Reports of the Association's activities had been faithfully covered by this paper over the years and it was no trouble for Dawson to insert a favourable article or two describing its aims, achievements and objectives. In South Africa, Crewe laid more ambitious plans and in July 1929 the first edition of the Association's own magazine, The 1820, was released.<sup>148</sup>

The advertisements in Britain attracted a great number of enquiries but no substantial numbers of prospective settlers came forward. The campaign had fallen on deaf ears. Crewe informed Lady Milner in January 1929 that settler numbers were still declining through no fault of the London executive.<sup>149</sup> The situation was becoming exasperating for Crewe. 'The most difficult work I have ever been engaged in is this job of settlement', he exclaimed to her. Numbers continued to decline stretching an already difficult financial situation. Crewe talked of resigning as chairman. His health was

breaking down, no doubt attributable to the increasing strain of keeping the Association going during such difficult times. However, private matters kept him from embarking on his convalescence and he was reinstated as chairman until his resignation in 1934.<sup>150</sup>

#### SECTION 5.8: A FINAL ASSESSMENT

Despite the Association's valiant attempt to continue promoting British immigration, even the ever optimistic Crewe could not deny the effect the lack of funds, settlers and domestic government support were having on its work. The severe shortage of cheap accessible land, the priority received by the poor whites after 1924 and the perennial battles with shady land companies also continued to restrict settlement.<sup>151</sup> From the political perspective the numbers game remained an important ideological principle in the race patriotism of Crewe and the Association. But as the 1920s progressed, revealing the political and economic realities which limited the number of British immigrants entering South Africa, they were forced to tone down the rhetoric. Instead, Crewe and his associates concentrated on the practical aspects of their policy such as publicity, fund raising, training, settler support and aftercare.

By the late 1920s, Crewe had resigned himself to the fact that numbers would be small, dictated by financial necessities and the class and type of settler it attempted to cultivate. The Association readily admitted that it could always do with more settlers but as they were not forthcoming it tried to hide behind the statement that quality was more important than quantity. But was it? The small numbers of settlers of the 'right type' were certainly not going to bring about the radical changes hoped for in the domestic political climate. By 1928, Crewe was forced to admit that the Association's efforts to maintain the British connection had not been as successful as originally anticipated. Nevertheless, he remained defiantly optimistic. The settlers were of 'such a kind that character and push count for much more than numbers, and there is no doubt they are making their mark'.<sup>152</sup> Maybe so, but it was large numbers of competent settlers that would have made a greater impact on the domestic scene, and they had not materialised. The thick end of the wedge had splintered.

Rather than establishing an imperial yeomanry on the South African

veldt, the Association had gone some way in creating an imperial gentry in rural South Africa. Nevertheless, the Association's achievements were noteworthy given the political environment. Between 1921 and 1930 it introduced approximately 20% of the total number of British immigrants who arrived in South Africa during the same period. Of the 5,414 British immigrants introduced since 1921, 4,810 still resided in the Union. Very few settlers failed, an achievement of which the Association was quite proud. Its failure rate was only 7.5%, which was a tribute to its emphasis on thorough screening and settler aftercare. Indeed, the settlers were of a high standard and possessed an enormous amount of investment capital. More importantly, they were the type who distinguished the Association's efforts from the immigration policies of the other Dominions.<sup>153</sup>

It was the Association's highly selective, socially exclusive policy which prevented it from recruiting greater numbers of settlers. Politics aside, the abundance of cheap black labour and the demands inflicted upon agriculture by the region's climate and topography militated against South Africa being a favoured destination for the average British emigrant. The onslaught of the depression in the 1930s discouraged many British subjects from emigrating at all, thus making it equally difficult for any private body to promote the British connection anywhere in the empire. Plus there was the problem of farming on the veldt with its emphasis on substantial capital reserves.

Despite the Association's claim that it was non-racial and apolitical, its determination to introduce a large British element to counteract Afrikanerism smacked of Milnerism and British race patriotism. Many Afrikaners quite rightly distrusted the motives of the Association, and it was a foregone conclusion that when the Nationalists came to power the poor white would receive priority. Afrikaner race patriotism triumphed, eliminating the need for the Nationalists to attack British immigration as a tool of imperial interests. The unification of Afrikanerdom through the establishment of a coalition government between Smuts and Hertzog in March 1933 effectively ended any hope of promoting large-scale British immigration to South Africa. Crewe for one certainly possessed no illusions as to the lack of support the Association had received from the authorities in South Africa. Irritated by the immigration rhetoric employed by both Smuts and Hertzog to woo the English vote, he exclaimed, 'as far as settlement was concerned it did not matter which Gov[ernmen]t was in office for I had

had no serious help from either! Smuts now talks about a strong immigration policy when he gets back to power, but he won't do anything. Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose'.<sup>154</sup> Perhaps the final testament belongs to Patrick Duncan. Writing to Lady Selborne he described a disheartening but all too common occurrence in Cape Town: 'I look out of the window at groups of English immigrants coming ashore from a ship just in, on its way to Australia....They pass our doors but do not stay here'.<sup>155</sup>

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78. Cory Library, Pamphlet Box 25, 'The 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association: A Brief Account of the Movement and A Few Plain Reasons for Supporting it', (1921), p. 3; A. J. Christopher, 'The European Concept of a Farm in Southern Africa', Historia, XV (1970), pp. 93-99; Charles Ballard, 'Climate and Environment in South African Economic History: The Indispensable Component', paper presented to the Fourth Biennial General Meeting of the Economic History Society of Southern Africa, Rhodes University (Grahamstown), July 1986.
79. The list included the President of the South African Senate, the Speaker of the House of Assembly, leading cabinet ministers, senators and provincial politicians as well as local civic leaders. Of significant importance was Crewe's successful canvassing of some of the major financial personalities and institutions in South Africa. The list included Sir Otto Beit, London stockbroker and younger brother of the deceased Sir Alfred Beit, leading financier and mining magnate; Solly Joel, diamond and gold mining magnate; Ernest Oppenheimer, founder of Anglo-American; and Lionel Phillips. Financial concerns included the Chamber of Mines, the South African Federated Chamber of Industries and the Standard Bank of South Africa. Lord Selborne became the first chairman of the London committee which was established in August 1920. Buxton and Smuts agreed to be honorary presidents.
80. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Milner to Crewe, 24 April 1921.
81. SAL, Merriman Papers, Crewe to Merriman, 1 May 1920.
82. 'A Brief Account of the Movement', pp. 4-5.
83. PRO, CO 721/21/1936, Crewe to OSC, 30 July 1920. The SASIC was absorbed by the Association during the formation of its London executive in August 1920. For details of incorporation see CO 721/36/1936, first report of the London executive, 30 September 1921.
84. BRA, Box 485, f. 1, minutes of the 1820 Memorial Settlers' Central Executive Committee, 12 April 1921.
85. Cory Library, Walton Papers, Smartt to Walton, 13 April 1922.
86. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Smartt to Crewe, 3 December 1921.
87. Quotation cited in Stone, Colonist or Uitlander?, p. 126.
88. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Phillips to Crewe, 7 October 1921.
89. Stone, Colonist or Uitlander?, p. 127.
90. PRO, CO 532/99/51865, memorandum by Colonel J. J. Byron, October 1917.
91. PRO, CO 721/21/1936, Colonial Office to London Committee of 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association, 11 August 1920; H. Handcock, Secretary of London Committee, to Macnaghten, 13 August 1920.
92. PRO, CO 721/23/2441, minute by Plant, 11 January 1921.
93. TAD, Smuts Papers, vol. 210, nos. 63 and 64, Crewe to Smuts, 5 April and 24 May 1923; Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Smartt to Crewe, 3 December 1921; ibid., Walton Papers, Smartt to Walton, 13 April, 19 May and 7 July 1922.

94. CAD, LDE 20593, III, Box 1082, interview between Mentz and Colonel Hartigan, chairman of the Associated Representatives of South African Land Selling Companies Ltd., 22 July 1921.
95. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Phillips to Crewe, 7 October 1921.
96. Ibid., Phillips to Crewe, 9 June 1921.
97. Ibid., Walton to Crewe, 24 July 1922.
98. CAD, LDE 20953, II, Box 1082, OSC to South African High Commission, 12 September 1921; telegram, Walton to Reitz, 4 November 1921; Department of Lands to Walton, 7 November 1921.
99. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Phillips to Crewe, 14 and 28 November 1921.
100. NELM, Fitzpatrick Papers, B/A IX 1071/166, Morris to Fitzpatrick, 22 November 1921; A/LC 1048/158, Fitzpatrick to Montagu Gadd, 25 November 1921.
101. Ibid., A/LC IV 1051/89 and 91, Fitzpatrick to Morris, 23 and 24 November 1921; A/LC II 1048/158, Fitzpatrick to Montagu Gadd, 25 November 1921; B/A X 1072/60, A. Mackie Niven, Johannesburg financier, to Fitzpatrick, 24 March 1922.
102. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 48, Crewe to Milner, 28 February 1921; 'A Brief Account of the Movement', p. 5.
103. PRO, CO 721/34/1936, Crewe to Amery, 18 June 1921; Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Phillips to Crewe, 7 October 1921.
104. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Crewe to Lady Milner, 31 March 1924.
105. BRA, Phillips Papers, Letter Book, PHI, XXXIII, Phillips to Crewe, 8 January 1923.
106. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 31 March 1924; Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Lord Leven to Crewe, 13 July, 2 August, 16 September, 6 November and 19 November 1924; ibid., Phillips to Crewe, 10 December 1924.
107. PRO, T 161/735/S 21362/1, capitation grant agreement signed between the Duke of Devonshire, Colonial Secretary, and the Association on 17 August 1923; Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 31 March 1924.
108. PRO, T 161/967/S 21362/01/1, L. Cuthbertson, Treasury representative on OSC, to E. T. Crutchley, OSC finance officer, 5 June 1925; PRO, Dominions Office Papers (hereafter DO), DO 57/13/1937, Crutchley to Cuthbertson, 22 January 1926; Cuthbertson to Crutchley, 27 January 1926.
109. PRO, DO 57/13/1937, Dominions Office minute, 12 January 1926; T 161/735/S 21362/2, Dominions Office to Treasury, 15 October 1928.
110. PRO, CO 721/83/0817/1, 'Notes of a Discussion at the Office of the High Commissioner for South Africa', 11 October 1923.

111. Ibid., minute by Niemeyer, 12 October 1923 and approved by Chamberlain, 15 October 1923.
112. Ibid., memorandum by Bankes Amery, 17 December 1923.
113. PRO, T 161/111/S 8787/014, E. H. Farrar to Macnaghten, 15 November 1923.
114. Ibid., Crewe to Handcock, 13 December 1923; Farrar to Macnaghten, 4 September 1924; Amery diaries, 7 February 1924.
115. PRO, T 161/111/S 8787/014, Bankes Amery to Cuthbertson, 25 November 1924 and Cuthbertson's reply, 28 November 1924.
116. PRO, T 161/111/S 8787/018, copy of agreements, 28 August 1925.
117. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Walton to Crewe, 24 July 1922; U.G. 8-1922, Annual Department Reports, Lands, pp. 181-2.
118. W. K. Hancock, Smuts: The Fields of Force, 1919-1950 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 157.
119. Cape Times, 15 June 1922; C. E. M. O'Dowd, 'The General Election of 1924', South African Historical Journal, no. 2 (November 1970), pp. 54-76; Kenneth Ingham, Jan Christian Smuts (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1986), pp. 118-47.
120. In November 1925, Crewe infuriated Hertzog with statements he made to King George V during a royal audience. Crewe gave the impression that South Africa would become a republic within a few years. Hertzog resented these remarks, claimed there was no justification for these allegations and attacked Crewe for abusing the occasion to the detriment of South Africa. Athlone reported to Amery that this was a most unfortunate incident which had upset Hertzog very much. It was Athlone's opinion that Crewe had certainly spoken too strongly. However, it was entirely within Crewe's character to do so because of his reputation as a political firebrand and his very strong views toward the Afrikaner. The matter was unfortunate for another reason because of Crewe's involvement with the Association. Amery Papers, Box G.92/4, I, Hertzog to Amery, 18 November 1925 and Athlone to Amery, 18 November 1925.
121. Davenport, A Modern History, p. 288.
122. Ibid., pp. 288-9.
123. PRO, CO 721/83/0817/1, Farrar to Macnaghten, 4 September 1924; Macnaghten to Farrar, 21 October 1924.
124. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Phillips to Crewe, 10 December 1924.
125. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 26 November 1925; ibid., Violet Milner Papers, C 243/1, Crewe to Lady Milner, 15 December 1924.
126. PRO, CO 721/83/0817/1, Athlone to Amery, 17 April 1925.
127. Bodleian, Violet Milner Papers, C 243/3, Crewe to Lady Milner, 30 May 1926.

128. CAD, LDE 20593/1, Box 1085, Pienaar to Secretary for Lands, 12 October 1925.
129. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 12 April 1926. Before returning to South Africa Blankenburg confided to Amery that he found Smit 'tiresome [and] a bit of a cad to boot'. Amery diaries, 26 March 1926.
130. Amery diaries, 22 December 1926.
131. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Amery to Crewe, 31 January 1925.
132. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 12 April 1926.
133. Cory Library, Crewe Papers, Smartt to Crewe, 16 December 1925.
134. PRO, T 161/967/S 21362/01/1, Crewe to Bankes Amery, 19 May 1925. The agreement was signed on 6 July 1925.
135. The Times, 24 December 1925; Bodleian, Violet Milner Papers, C 243/1-3, Crewe to Lady Milner, 15 December 1925, 16 April and 30 May 1926; ibid., Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 11 September 1926.
136. PRO, T 161/967/S 21362/01/1, M. M. Hartigan, secretary of the London executive, to the Dominions Office, 23 September 1926; The Times, 25 May 1926.
137. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 12 and 26 July 1926; Killie Campbell Africana Library (hereafter KCAL), University of Natal (Durban), J. S. Marwick Papers, f. 5, Crewe to Marwick, 8 November 1926.
138. KCAL, Marwick Papers, Crewe to Marwick, 8 November 1926; Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 10 October 1926.
139. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Hartigan to Lady Milner, 29 September 1926; PRO, T 161/967/S 21362/01/1, Hartigan to Dominions Office, 23 September 1926. The revised agreement was signed on 19 November 1926.
140. See PRO, T 161/967/S 21362/01/1 and DO 57/120/0513/2 and /4 for the relevant correspondence concerning the subsidy extensions.
141. PRO, T 161/735/S 21362/2, report by Crutchley (c. 1928).
142. Ibid., memorandum by Leven, 13 February 1928; Bodleian, Violet Milner Papers, C 243/8, Crewe to Lady Milner, 21 October 1928.
143. PRO, T 161/967/S 21362/01/1, J. R. S. MacLeod, assistant principal attached to OSC, to F. Skevington, junior Treasury official, 9 September 1931; CAD, Governor-General's Archive, Box 2253, f. 1/27, report on the working of Robian, 1 July 1928 to 30 June 1929.
144. PRO, T 161/967/S 21362/01/1, Crutchley to Cuthbertson, 21 July 1928.
145. The 1820, I, 11 (May 1930), p. 27.
146. The Times, 4 July 1928, cited in Stone, Colonist or Uitlander?, p. 128.



147. The Times, 13 July 1927.
148. The 1820, I, 1 (July 1929).
149. Bodleian, Violet Milner Papers, C 243/9, Crewe to Lady Milner, 31 January 1929; Stone, Colonist or Uitlander?, p. 128.
150. Bodleian, Violet Milner Papers, C 243/8 and /11, Crewe to Lady Milner, 21 October 1928 and 11 July 1929; The 1820, I, 9 (February 1930), p. 13; ibid., I, 12 (June 1930), p. 9.
151. Bodleian, Violet Milner Papers, C 243/11, Crewe to Lady Milner, 11 July 1929; ibid., Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 12 April 1926; Bradlow, II, pp. 514-5.
152. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 24 March 1927 and 10 January 1928.
153. CAD, Governor-General's Archive, Box 2253, f. 1/27, 'Report from the General Manager for Settlement for the year ending 30th June 1929', pp. 1-2; The 1820, II, 2 (August 1930), p. 17. By August 1930 the settler total had climbed to 5,800. Statistics also revealed the cost effectiveness of the Association's work. Between January 1921 and January 1925, 1179 adult settlers and 698 dependents arrived possessing £3 million of investment capital or approximately £2,544 per adult. The total cost incurred by the Association was £21,585 or £11.10s per person.
154. Bodleian, Milner Papers, Box 671, Crewe to Lady Milner, 3 December 1925.
155. Quotation cited in Bradlow, II, p. 512.

## CHAPTER SIX

### AUSTRALIA: ENTHUSIASTIC BUT EXTRAVAGANT

During the inter-war period Australia was the Dominion to participate most enthusiastically in a host of high-minded imperial projects designed to reinforce the cultural and economic bonds of empire. This was certainly evident in the field of imperial migration. Australians were proud of their Anglo-Saxon ancestry, traditions and institutions. The 'White Australia' policy which barred 'coloured' immigration confirmed Australia's commitment to keep its racial heritage pure, vibrant and white. These Social-Darwinist attitudes were shared with varying degrees of intensity throughout the self-governing Dominions, but Australia clearly demonstrated the most aggressive stance.<sup>1</sup>

However, its eagerness to attract British immigrants disguised a turbulent domestic environment in which several sections of Australian society developed a growing hostility to all forms of immigration. World War I widened divisions within Australian society along political, social and class lines. Politically, divisions were roughly drawn on a rural-urban axis between pastoral, nationalist conservatives and metropolitan, anti-war labourites. It is, however, dangerous to oversimplify the demarcation of these political battle lines because rural conservatives shared some common ground with large and powerful urban anti-labour interests represented by big business, banking and industry. It was the conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917, however, which exposed and enhanced these deepening and increasingly bitter divisions; and it was conscription which introduced religion as a new and volatile component into the domestic fray.

Although most of Australia's working-class were British and Protestant in origin, questions were raised after 1915 concerning Australia's participation in the war, in particular the need for conscription, which the membership of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) vehemently opposed. As the war intensified opposition to it strengthened, especially among radicals and Catholics of Irish descent spurred by the Easter Uprising in Dublin in April 1916. Some Irish

labourites began to increase their power and influence through the local machinery of several regional ALP districts such as Melbourne where there was a large Irish community. As a result, nationalists mistakenly but conveniently branded the labour movement as Catholic dominated, Sinn Fein in sympathy and therefore anti-British and unpatriotic. With the triumph of Bolshevism in Russia in 1917 nationalists easily equated the growing domestic industrial and social unrest with this dangerous international and apparently working-class malady. Bolshevism was quickly added to the nationalists' list of anti-labour catchphrases and so far as they were concerned Catholics and Sinn Feiners were also Bolsheviks.

When the war ended the issue of British immigration posed a problem for Australian labour. It conceded that Australia needed to look to Britain for immigrants, but it was cautious of supporting immigration while there was unemployment in the country. Immigration was useful so long as the employers did not use it to exploit Australian labour and the working-class. On the other hand, Irish labour activists denounced British immigration and protested against Australia's participation in any empire migration scheme. At the other end of the spectrum were the ultra-patriots led by reputable, middle-class British Protestants. They had enthusiastically supported the war, and when it ended, they looked forward to a massive influx of British immigrants who would simultaneously develop Australia's economic potential, shore up the domestic scene against Bolsheviks, Catholics and Sinn Feiners, and reinforce the imperial link. Consequently, it is in this larger domestic context that Australian soldier settlement must be examined. Soldier settlement was not simply a patriotic policy designed to enhance national development and reward Australian manhood for its wartime sacrifices. Instead, it was a politically motivated policy used by the conservative and nationalist elements within Australian society to preserve their position vis-à-vis the new and increasingly militant forces of socialism.<sup>2</sup>

There are two other distinct but complementary issues, one economic and one constitutional, which need emphasising. The wartime wranglings between the Commonwealth and States over soldier settlement policy and its subsequent financial control marred and certainly impeded the ultimate objective of 'national development'. Constitutionally, the problem stemmed from the financial arrangements between the two levels of government. Prior to 1914 the Commonwealth was not a borrower of any

size in the domestic or international money markets. Rather, it was the State treasuries which had the experience of raising capital overseas. However, with the advent of war the Commonwealth became a substantial borrower. This led to stiff competition for capital in a shrinking market between the federal and State levels during and immediately after the war. Rationalisation was needed to eliminate undue competition, but until 1930 the Commonwealth Treasury was nothing more than a glorified accounting house where the States queued for their annual grants. From 1923, with the establishment of a voluntary Loan Council representing central and regional governments, the Commonwealth slowly began to assert itself. In 1928 the Loan Council became a statutory body and one year later it was in the position where it could impose its will and control borrowing for the entire country. The beginning of the depression in 1929 certainly helped the federal government to reinforce its position. However, it was not until 1942 that the Commonwealth finally attained financial supremacy. In the meantime, the Commonwealth and State governments continued to haggle and bicker over various aspects of finance and expenditure.<sup>3</sup>

But what was meant by 'national development'? It certainly did not refer to secondary industry and manufacturing. Instead, it referred to the development of Australia's seemingly limitless primary resources. Development meant land settlement, public works and immigration. Likewise, it reinforced the agrarian myth and rural society and ignored the areas where Australia's future wealth and prosperity truly lay.<sup>4</sup> Unlike Canada, there was no coordinated national plan for development because of the competition between the Commonwealth and the States for capital and their conflicting views of what national development entailed. Soldier settlement was a key component of Australian 'national development' but because of inter-governmental rivalry and conflict throughout the 1920s it suffered from a lack of coordination and cooperation which left its indelible mark on Australian efforts to create a landed yeomanry.

## SECTION 6: THE ANZAC LEGEND

'Our duty', proclaimed Senator E. D. Millen, Australia's Minister of Repatriation, 'is...to labour together and build, even upon the initial mistakes and apparent failure inevitable in a national

undertaking of this magnitude, that in the final analysis our work shall be proven solvent, sound, and justified by its achievements'.<sup>5</sup> The Australian experience of resettling ex-servicemen on the land after the World War I proved contrary to Millen's patriotic but misplaced optimism. In the final analysis, Australia's 'achievements' were a series of regional disasters whose overall failure plagued State and Commonwealth administrations throughout the inter-war period. What differentiated Australian efforts from those of her sister Dominions was the range, direction and variety of schemes undertaken.<sup>6</sup>

Land settlement had always been an integral part of the Australian experience and a necessary feature of State politics. According to one observer, soldier settlement 'was a policy which carried with it no implications that were either revolutionary or experimental. It simply meant that whereas the primary producers of the pre-war period were civilians, a large number of the primary producers of the post-war era would be civilians' who had served in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Soldier settlement was therefore not an innovation but simply a phase of Australian land settlement which was also one important aspect of Australia's repatriation programme.<sup>7</sup> Generally speaking, this is true but it glosses over the social and political implications inherent in soldier settlement. It also ignores the imperial element: the intended contribution of British ex-servicemen who settled in Australia, the role played by British capital which provided the financial basis of many soldier settlement projects and the utilisation of soldier settlement as a patriotic vehicle for ideas in social planning, economic regeneration and imperial solidarity.

Soldier settlement was seen as a national obligation, a patriotic gesture designed to demonstrate Australia's gratitude for the sacrifices her manhood had made in protecting individual freedom, international democracy and the empire. It was an emotional response sparked from a deep-seated sense of responsibility for the returned man. Furthermore, it was a constructive policy which would contribute to the continued economic prosperity and social well-being of both the individual and the state. Of central importance to this basic premise was the concept of the yeoman farmer and its relationship within the Australian agrarian myth.

The ideological basis of Australia's agrarian myth was two-fold and was firmly embedded in a neo-mercantilist doctrine which was rigorously endorsed during the 1920s under the banner 'Men, money and

markets'. It was based on the exploitation and diversification of Australia's extensive and seemingly infinite land resources which, it was thought, could best be developed by small, independent farmers. Generated surpluses would be exported to Great Britain while the small farmer would provide a market for British manufactured goods.<sup>8</sup> Complementing the economic strand was the 'romantic, populist and arcadian idea that farming represented an idealistic way of life because it was 'close to nature', and was therefore in some way morally superior to urban industrial life'.<sup>9</sup> In Australia's concept of rural arcadia the yeoman farmer was industrious, autonomous, dedicated and hardworking. He was the mainstay of society and his vocation was the life-blood of the nation. The maintenance of a large class of stalwart primary producers, it was believed, guaranteed Australia's economic, social, political, military and moral security because a healthy rural community ensured a vibrant and prosperous nation.<sup>10</sup> The yeoman farmer was therefore both progenitor and protector of that legacy.

During the First World War a new legend and tradition emerged which not only paralleled the agrarian myth and the yeoman ideal but shared some of their common features. The 'Anzac' legend or 'digger' tradition was created during the unsuccessful Gallipoli campaign. For Australians, Gallipoli signified not just the first major test of its military prowess, but more importantly a coming of age. And by the end of the war it was assumed and believed by Australians that indeed Australia had achieved nationhood.<sup>11</sup> The campaign created the Anzac '[o]ne of the most powerful and influential images in the [Australian] national consciousness'; one that was extremely important in moulding a distinctive national identity and character.<sup>12</sup>

What were the qualities of the Anzac myth? What were its origins? And how did they relate to the agrarian myth and the yeoman ideal? The Australian public saw the Anzac as 'tough and inventive, loyal to [his] mates beyond the call of duty, a bit undisciplined...chivalrous, gallant, sardonic'.<sup>13</sup> Mateship, 'that strange blend of individualism and interdependence', was an important quality which was reinforced time and time again under the stressful conditions of battle.<sup>14</sup> But these attributes were not created at Anzac Cove. They were heightened and as a result ingrained deeper into the national character. Their roots extended from a truly Australian phenomenon which had been transformed into a myth in its own right - the tradition of the bush or 'outback'. Resourcefulness, initiative, perseverance, trustworthiness, manliness

and mateship were values highly praised. Rekindled by the war this tradition and its values found fertile ground in the exploits of the Anzacs. For the Australian historian Geoffrey Serle, the Australian soldier or 'digger was only a new version of the bushmen'.<sup>15</sup>

Conversely, these same attributes were contained in the yeoman ideal and had significant overtones for the soldier settler. For if the Anzac stereotype can be equated to a wartime version of the bushmen, then the soldier settler provides continuity between the pre-war concept of the yeoman ideal with the post-war concepts of the agrarian myth and the modern yeoman farmer.

The cross-fertilisation of the outback, yeoman and Anzac traditions had important political implications during the post-war era. Prior to 1914, the free thinking and self-sufficient yeoman symbolised stability, achievement and democracy. He was enshrined as the ideal Australian. During the war the digger became a role model because he too incorporated the best qualities of Australian character, manhood and citizenship. Once again, the soldier settler combined the ideals of the yeoman farmer with the Anzac tradition to become a symbol of post-war political stability. This was particularly important for the conservative elements of Australian society who wholeheartedly embraced soldier settlement because it was seen as a method of reinforcing Australian society against what they saw as the socially destructive forces of syndicalism, Bolshevism and militant trade unionism.<sup>16</sup>

#### SECTION 6.1: A DEBT OF HONOUR

In July 1915 the first casualties began arriving in Australia from Gallipoli, but the Commonwealth government had still to formulate a repatriation policy. Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, who was being attacked for the shabby reception of Australia's first group of returning heroes, was eager to make amends. At the end of July he announced his government's commitment to give returned ex-servicemen preference in government employment.<sup>17</sup> By the beginning of August, the Commonwealth government produced a preliminary outline of a scheme to provide employment for returned servicemen. A Federal Parliamentary War Committee was established to supervise and coordinate work between the federal executive, the State governments, municipal authorities, commercial and industrial interests. A State Council would be set up in

each State to liaise with the federal executive and the local authorities. The great fear was 'that a number of separately controlled organisations may spring up, and that confusion, inefficiency, and overlapping may result'.<sup>18</sup> That the responsibility for the returned soldier was a national obligation which had to be met was obvious. More importantly, it was recognition that the state had to positively intervene in areas of social policy hitherto the realm of private initiative and philanthropy.

There was a more immediate political consideration, however, inextricably woven into Australia's war effort. As Marilyn Lake demonstrates in her recent study of soldier settlement in Victoria:

The discharged soldiers were highly visible in Australia's cities and if unemployed, destitute or in other ways seemingly ill used, became a hindrance to recruiting. Australians relied on voluntary recruiting and from the beginning of the war, government spokesmen felt obliged to promise material rewards to prospective soldiers to entice them to enlist.<sup>19</sup>

As the slaughter in France stretched AIF manpower requirements, recruiters were faced with a daunting task. The need to maintain recruitment levels while at the same time mollify the returned soldier became a delicate political conundrum. Pension plans, promises of preferential treatment in employment and land settlement schemes were designed to solve the problem. The haste with which Australian administrators jumped at the idea of land settlement as a salvation to solving the recruitment problem was an emotional response to a problem that needed cool, calm and careful consideration. Recruits who went to the front believing that they would get farms under generous conditions after the war were being deceived by a government which had not properly examined the issue.<sup>20</sup> At the same time the recruits were deceiving themselves, blinded by their patriotism and sense of duty.

In July 1915 Victoria and New South Wales announced that returned soldiers would be given preferential treatment under their respective Land Acts. However, New South Wales went one step further and outlined its intention to reserve special soldier settlement areas. The Governor of Western Australia, Major-General Sir Harry Barron, reported to the Colonial Office that immigration and especially soldier settlement were 'receiving the serious consideration of the [State] Government'.<sup>21</sup> South Australia, which had been formulating a policy as early as June,



announced its intentions in July too but warned that its chief obstacle would be to acquire enough land. Tasmania was slower to respond. Governor Sir William Macartney was informed by his ministers that the issue would be discussed at cabinet level once the Tasmanian Parliamentary War Council was constituted.<sup>22</sup> Queensland, just as patriotic, was prepared to make definite arrangements assuming however that the Imperial government cooperated by providing railway facilities to serve land designated for soldier settlement. The Colonial Office was unsure if this meant building the railways or providing the capital. In any case, a non-committal answer was despatched to Queensland's Labor government.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, the Federal Parliamentary War Committee slowly mobilised its administrative resources. At the end of August, J. C. Watson, a former Labor Prime Minister (April-August 1904), accepted the position as the committee's honorary organiser. On 17 September, Watson released a suggested plan of action which would ensure employment and land settlement opportunities for returned soldiers after the war. 'The problem of settling returned soldiers on the land', he explained, 'is, in the main, the problem of settling the moneyless man in a calling which requires capital, and presents some aspects of peculiar difficulty'. For example, apart from in Western Australia and Queensland, good and accessible Crown land suitable for settlement was in short supply. State War Councils would have to rely on purchasing privately owned land conveniently located to railway facilities. The scarcity and high prices of livestock complicated the matter, but Watson was cheerfully confident that these obstacles could be surmounted by enlisting the benevolence of the patriotic and public-spirited community.<sup>24</sup>

What about the extension of the land settlement privileges to British ex-servicemen desirous of settling in Australia after the war? Preliminary indications were that nothing had been decided. South Australia reported that large areas of land were available for Australian and British ex-soldiers but for the time being no allowance could be made for British ex-servicemen until domestic requirements had been fulfilled. The New South Wales government concurred.<sup>25</sup> Queensland, on the other hand, had made its offer conditional on financial support from the Imperial Exchequer. Once again, Watson was confident that more land would be offered than was necessary to meet the requirements for Australian soldiers, and that the excess would be held

at the disposal of discharged British ex-servicemen. 'Of these latter there is every reason to believe there will be a large number, and if they can be provided for they will represent a most desirable accession to the national strength of the Commonwealth'.<sup>26</sup>

Haggard arrived in Australia at the beginning of April 1916, at exactly the moment Commonwealth and State officials were formulating a repatriation policy. Although all the States had promised concessions for returning soldiers in 1915 only South Australia had followed through on its earlier promises and formulated a somewhat limited policy. The remaining States proved very reluctant to initiate their own soldier settlement programmes. Premier John Scaddan of Western Australia dismissed State responsibility altogether believing that the initiative rested solely with the Commonwealth government. Apart from preferential treatment and a few minor concessions, at the beginning of 1916 there was no general scheme which gave form to the promises offered by the States in 1915. The difficulty was capital.

An essential pre-requisite was a financial plan of action which clearly delineated responsibility between the Commonwealth and State governments.<sup>27</sup> In mid-February 1916 an interstate conference of Premiers and Ministers for Lands was convened in Melbourne to discuss the settlement of returned men on the land. A state of urgency shrouded the entire conference. Everyone concerned agreed that the necessary repatriation machinery had to be in place before the war ended so as to minimise social distress and economic dislocation. More significantly, an immediate and substantive policy had to be decided upon for certain social and political considerations. The Victorian government was especially apprehensive about the political implications of delay because of the harmful effects it could have on recruitment. As a result, it was important to 'settle and launch the scheme as soon as possible'. Watson stressed that in light of the recent and violent disturbances involving returned men in Melbourne it was crucial to get the returned soldiers away from the urban areas and on to the land at the earliest possible moment.<sup>28</sup> He advocated this approach for several reasons. Labour was becoming increasingly restless and began to question seriously the extent of Australia's participation in the war. Conservative politicians feared that the growing number of returned men might be tempted to join forces with labour as a means of voicing their own grievances which in turn would effect recruitment and morale. Something had to be done to prevent this situation from developing and to

make the returned man an ally rather than a potential enemy of the state. As Marilyn Lake suggests, Australia was panicked into soldier settlement by the fear of 'cities...congested with idle men'.<sup>29</sup>

The conference eventually agreed on a general plan based on the recommendations laid down by Watson and a sub-committee of the Federal Parliamentary War Committee which had presented its report in mid-January. The Commonwealth and State governments pledged their cooperation in the promotion of soldier settlement, but the States remained hesitant and cautious about their role. It was made very clear that the provision of land rested solely with the States, therefore making them responsible for the administration and organisation of settlement policy. The Commonwealth provided the funds by means of loans to the States who advanced the money to the settler through their respective agricultural banks. Furthermore, to meet the special requirements of the soldier settler the States agreed to liberalise the conditions of repayment and charge reduced rates of interest. The establishment of training farms and settler qualification committees was stressed to ensure proper selection and screening of applicants.<sup>30</sup>

## SECTION 6.2: BRITISH PERCEPTIONS OF AUSTRALIAN RESPONSES 1916-20

Meanwhile, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, Governor-General of Australia, was asked to monitor Haggard's progress. Munro-Ferguson was sceptical of Australian land settlement schemes and the RCI initiative. When he first heard of Grey's imperial soldier settlement scheme he informed the Colonial Office that the situation in Australia was discouraging. The depressing feature was government incompetence to promote an effective and coordinated land utilisation policy. It was this indifference to inter-governmental cooperation, which according to Munro-Ferguson, 'discourages agriculture and concentrates upon wasteful and wild-cat projects all the available resources of the country - and renders labour the chief burden on the State instead of its main support'.<sup>31</sup> The trade unions, he noted, had always been hostile toward immigration, white and coloured. Although some sections of Australian public opinion recognised the need to bolster the white population against the expanding Asian populations to the north, he believed Haggard's tour would aggravate trade union militancy against British immigration. '[T]he Unions control [immigration] Policy [which] is

selfish, urban and short-sighted, arrogant, to an almost inconceivable degree. Haggard is quite likely to stir up this sleeping dog in the manger and bring this antagonism into organised activity'. Moreover, Munro-Ferguson placed little confidence in Haggard's abilities or usefulness.<sup>32</sup>

To the surprise and chagrin of Colonial Office officials in London and several British plenipotentiaries in Australia, Haggard's tour of Australia was a resounding success.<sup>33</sup> Haggard knew how vital it was to score an initial success right from the start because he realised that if one of the wealthier States like Victoria refused assistance the others might be inclined to follow. There were anxious moments, especially in Labor controlled New South Wales and Queensland, but the tremendous popular enthusiasm which his speeches and mission generated made it very difficult for the States not to offer some concessions to British soldier settlers.<sup>34</sup> 'Thanks partly to Sir Rider Haggard who found public opinion on the turn', Munro-Ferguson informed Bonar Law, 'there has been a change in public sentiment on the subject' of immigration.<sup>35</sup> His timing had been critical. Haggard cabled the RCI from Adelaide in May that there 'is an open door throughout Australia for our ex-servicemen'. This endorsement was received at the Premiers' Conference, attended by Haggard, in which the participants resolved 'to treat...returned British soldiers in a manner similar to that in which returned Australian soldiers are treated'. Of course, the various promises of land and equal treatment for British soldier settlers would depend upon how the British government reacted to Australian generosity. 'It is quite a toss up, with odds against', recorded Haggard, 'as the [British] Government or the permanent officials...are sure to be openly or secretly obstructive, unless distress and tumult force them to action'.<sup>36</sup>

The chief difficulty remained money. The States' attitude towards the Commonwealth's role as the financial arbiter was varied. Naturally, they were anxious to get as much out of the federal authorities as possible. W. Hutchinson, Victoria's Minister of Crown Lands and Survey, reminded his colleagues that to make land available railways would have to be built. He hinted that the Commonwealth should assist in building the necessary communications infrastructure if the States were to be left with organising and administering soldier settlement. The Assistant Treasurer for New South Wales, H. C. Hoyle, pointed out that buying land would involve considerable expenditure at a time when money

markets were stagnant. If the money was obtained for soldier settlement it might prove impossible to get money for other public works projects. This rational approach to the problem was contrasted with the 'strangely confident' mood of Western Australia and Queensland who submitted expensive estimates and claimed that their ambitious projects could be fulfilled provided the money was available. W. D. Johnson, Minister of Lands and Agriculture for Western Australia, boasted that his state could easily settle 40,000 veterans. The difficulty, he saw, would be finding them.<sup>37</sup>

By mid-1916 the Commonwealth faced an ever increasing war debt. The financial strain on the London money market was enormous forcing the British Exchequer to close the marketplace to small short-term borrowers such as the Australian States. The Imperial government now regarded the Commonwealth as the sole Australian borrower on the London market, which the State governments reluctantly agreed to the previous November. W. G. Higgs, the Commonwealth Treasurer, reassured his State colleagues that the Australian government would try and raise money for public works on their behalf, but he warned that the markets were extremely tight.<sup>38</sup> How then were the State governments going to honour their promises?

The Imperial government posed the same question. It recognised that the speed of land settlement was dictated by the States' ability to borrow money to facilitate road and railway construction. Colonial Office officials were convinced that the money supply would remain tight after the war limiting the scope of these projects. As far as they were concerned Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania were the only States to which substantial numbers of British ex-servicemen were likely to migrate because of a genuine desire on the part of those States to encourage their settlement.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, snapped one permanent official, 'the Australians are too much inclined already to spend money and energy on public works which would be better devoted to carrying on the war'.<sup>40</sup> But this was precisely the point which British authorities only partially recognised. As the war dragged on limiting the sources of capital available to the States it began to emerge that their support for soldier settlement was really an indirect means of getting development capital in wartime for a host of road, rail and irrigation schemes.

There were other reservations. Farming was a heartbreaking endeavour for most settlers and the idea of an inexperienced British

soldier clearing his own farm, unaccustomed to the tedious, heavy manual labour and carrying an enormous long-term debt, made British officials doubt the practicality of the exercise.<sup>41</sup> Besides, the Colonial Office insisted on maintaining a wait-and-see attitude in 1916 vis-à-vis post-war migration. 'We are still ignorant of what the post-war conditions will be, and whether it will be right to encourage or discourage emigration, or simply to pursue the neutral policy of the period before the war'.<sup>42</sup>

The promise of a farm was a valuable recruiting tool in 1916. During the state election in New South Wales, Governor Sir Gerald Strickland observed that both political parties were cultivating the votes of the returned man. Although recruitment was up Strickland took exception to the expenditure involved in fulfilling the election promises: 'I have warned Ministers that ardour to win the General Election should not be carried too far, and I have asked them to reflect on the financial consequences of their promises'.<sup>43</sup> For the remainder of 1916 the political situation centred on the conscription referendum and overshadowed all other issues in Australia. Soldier settlement therefore remained in limbo. Tasmania and New South Wales did pass legislation but the numbers of returned men eager to take up farming were small and usually unfit. Some States, particularly Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria, began to realise that financial aspects would dictate and govern a scheme's ultimate success. This was hammered home when the Commonwealth advances promised in February and May were not forthcoming because of the Commonwealth government's failure to raise the money in Britain.<sup>44</sup>

It was resolved at the Premiers' Conference of January 1917 that British veterans would be granted unconditionally the same soldier settlement facilities as Australians. The Commonwealth was prepared to advance a total of £2 million for soldier settlement in 1917 which comprised of an advance to the States of a grant to a maximum of £500 per settler. The States complained that this figure was inadequate and wanted it raised to £700.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, Munro-Ferguson questioned both the sincerity to put British soldier settlers on an equal footing and the reality behind the settlement projects open to British settlers. It was his belief that the general opinion in Australia was that it was not bound to provide the same terms for overseas immigrants. Repatriation would be a costly affair and Munro-Ferguson realised that the £10 million already earmarked for public

works was inadequate for Australian veterans. It was also clear that the estimates for the settler advance were too low and would soon have to be raised. He concluded that such gloomy prospects did not inspire much confidence in Australia for prospective overseas candidates.<sup>46</sup> 'One effect of the high cost of settlement', wrote the Governor-General, 'will be that the British Tommy will not have a look in [and] that all hope of strengthening Australia by immigration is once more lost. It sometimes seems to me as if Australia were determined to commit Harri Kari'.<sup>47</sup>

Problems associated with domestic demobilisation and repatriation absorbed the attention of both the Commonwealth and State governments between 1917 and 1920. As 1917 unfolded it became painfully obvious that soldier settlement would become ensnared in the perennial battle over States rights. The battle lines were drawn during the Premiers' Conference of January 1917. National defence was a Commonwealth matter and as such the Commonwealth was responsible for the recruitment, training and outfitting of Australia's troops. Naturally, this included their subsequent repatriation. Prime Minister Hughes reaffirmed this pledge to the returned soldier during the conference. But he attempted unsuccessfully to give the Commonwealth a more positive and constructive role in the formulation of a uniform soldier settlement policy which would guarantee equal treatment for the returned man nationwide. He argued that as long as the Commonwealth was required to find the money to pay for repatriation and soldier settlement it was entitled to know what measures the States were proposing to implement. He did not go as far as to demand that the Commonwealth should directly intervene in State administration. Rather, he pleaded for some kind of central authority which would monitor and coordinate the various State activities.

Alarmed, the States interpreted Hughes's demands as a claim for control and would have none of it. They refused to be bullied by Hughes's financial strong-arm tactics. Land settlement was clearly a State responsibility and the Premiers ensured that it, and hence soldier settlement, remained separate from the general repatriation policy.<sup>48</sup> Intolerant of Commonwealth interference, each State embarked on its own soldier settlement scheme. The result, according to the historical geographer J. M. Powell, 'was a bewildering variety of approaches in which the distinctive common ingredient was this jealously protected unequal alliance with the federal government'.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the

fragility of the alliance was intensified as the States, who regarded the Commonwealth as simply 'a mere lending machine', tried to squeeze the maximum amount of subsidy money from the federal partner.<sup>50</sup>

But Hughes was no fool. He clearly recognised that the Commonwealth's negotiating position vis-à-vis the States on inter-government financial matters had been substantially enhanced by Britain's decision to restrict the London money market to the Commonwealth for the duration of the war. Hughes was presented with an opportunity to bring the States into line and allow for greater central control in specific policy areas such as 'national development'. During the conference he re-emphasised the precariousness of Australia's financial situation, in particular the States' desire to continue their public works programmes. 'I should like to get this matter quite clear', he reminded his State counterparts, 'Our chances of getting money largely depend upon the extent of the facilities we will offer British soldiers to take up land in Australia'.<sup>51</sup> The extension of soldier settlement privileges to British ex-servicemen therefore must not be seen simply as a patriotic gesture. Politically, it was a means by which the Commonwealth government could assert itself in the federal arena. More importantly, British ex-servicemen became a vehicle which allowed access to British capital.

Meanwhile, Munro-Ferguson was concerned that the Commonwealth government was unprepared to deal with the problems of repatriation. He was extremely doubtful that the Commonwealth could provide the resources for the contemplated resettlement of 40,000 Australian soldier settlers at an estimated cost of £60 million. And he was alarmed by Senator Millen's apparent nonchalant attitude towards the cost.<sup>52</sup> The initial enthusiasm for resettling British ex-servicemen began to wane as well. South Australia, which was the first State to extend an invitation to British ex-servicemen and the first to initiate a soldier settlement policy, was the first to overturn its previous offer because of the difficulties it was having establishing its own returned men. It was forced to suspend its offer to British ex-servicemen until domestic arrangements were completed. Only Western Australia remained steadfast in its determination to assist British veterans but even here there was concern as to how expensive the invitation would prove to be and who would pay for it.<sup>53</sup>

William Macartney, now Governor of Western Australia, advised the British government to treat post-war soldier settlement in Australia



with 'great caution'. He warned that there were better chances, more opportunities and less risk for the small farmer in Britain than in Western Australia.<sup>54</sup> Much of the land targeted for development was of inferior quality, heavily forested and required an enormous amount of capital and back breaking work to bring under cultivation. The optimum size of a farm which ensured the best possibility of success was 1,000 acres. However, cost made this type of settlement impossible on a large scale and out of reach for the vast majority of British ex-servicemen. He also discounted the enthusiastic claims made by Premier James Mitchell, himself a large and successful farmer, that mixed farming could be conducted by soldier settlers in the southwest on a profitable basis with holdings of just fifty acres. Macartney doubted the soundness of Mitchell's claims because of the cost, isolation and limited amount of suitable farm land in the region.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, men with capital could 'no doubt find plenty of land fit for cattle raising or sheep on a large scale but the small man would be beaten by the high cost of handling the great distances and the absence of local markets'. Labour costs and railway rates were high, exacerbated by a cumbersome, inflexible and irksome Lands administration. Without sheep or cattle rearing to ballast the farmer's revenue, agriculture was an enterprise Macartney advised British soldiers not to undertake in Western Australia. 'At the present moment the position is very unsatisfactory and contains the elements of much future trouble'. Macartney therefore advised careful scrutiny of each proposed soldier settlement scheme before ex-Imperials were induced to come out.<sup>56</sup>

There was another problem, which according to Macartney and Sir H. L. Galway, Governor of South Australia, was just as serious and potentially more dangerous than extravagant State expenditure. It was the 'human' factor. 'The average returned soldier is not an easy individual to handle', wrote Galway.<sup>57</sup> Macartney agreed. War service had definitely unsettled a large number of returned men which rendered them 'unfit or unwilling to resume what they now look upon as a very monotonous and dreary life, devoid of any excitement and also necessitating steady and continuous work'.<sup>58</sup>

### SECTION 6.3: THE RETURNED SERVICEMEN'S LEAGUE AND FREE PASSAGE

Rather than being a threat to the state, most returned soldiers were loyal, trustworthy defenders of the status quo. Although some returned soldiers proved to be an increasingly disruptive element in Australian society after 1915, the majority of veterans staunchly supported the Hughes government and its prosecution of the war. Represented by the influential Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia (the national body established in 1916 out of the various state Returned Servicemen's Associations and better known as the Returned Servicemen's League or RSL) the returned soldier movement became an important ally of the government. The Commonwealth government realised it needed to maintain RSL support for its wartime policies because it realised the RSL's importance in furthering its repatriation programme. The government's willingness to recognise the RSL as the official representative body of returned soldiers, and the announcement in September 1917 that the government was prepared to offer it financial assistance, confirmed the RSL's role as chief arbiter between the Commonwealth and the vast majority of Australian ex-servicemen.<sup>59</sup> As well, the RSL was under the direction of men of moderate views, it being primarily concerned with developing a reputation as a responsible, orderly, disciplined body. As a result, the political power and influence of the RSL grew steadily. And although the RSL made a conscious effort to remain apolitical, it exerted a powerful political influence during recruitment drives and for the "Yes" vote during the conscription referenda.

There was little indication of soldiers joining revolutionary Soldiers' and Workers' Councils. According to Sir F. A. Newdegate, Macartney's successor as Governor of Western Australia, '[t]he root idea of the League is to combat "Bolshevism" and individually to put the same energy into the development of Australia as their service at the Front, and be a power for good in Australia'.<sup>60</sup> Very few disputed the loyalty of the majority of the veterans. However, there were radical elements among the returned soldiery and within the RSL itself. Although essentially an organisation of the right, the government's recognition of the RSL as the official voice of the returned soldier was designed in part to keep it in line. The federal authorities also monitored the political activity of many returned soldiers, in particular, Labor's

efforts to organise them. As industrial militancy spread in 1917 and class divisions widened Hughes's Nationalist government became increasingly worried about the loyalty of the returned man. The factionalism and disharmony among the returned soldiers in 1919 seemed to confirm the government's worst fears as some joined in support of striking trade unionists.<sup>61</sup> However, most diggers were a force of law and order who would, if called upon, keep the peace during times of civil disobedience. Indeed, there were violent clashes involving returned soldiers representing right-wing nationalist opinion and militant trade unionists, the most serious occurring in 1918 and 1919. But the RSL worked hard to prevent violence, divert this energy into constructive not destructive channels and avoid embarrassing the government and itself.<sup>62</sup>

It was not until 1920 that the first wave of British ex-servicemen began arriving in Australia under the auspices of the Imperial government's free passage scheme. Throughout 1919 discussions between the OSC and Australian representatives focussed on passage rates, fare equalisation and shipping accommodation. Once the free passage scheme was in full swing the scarcity of shipping began to hamper severely Australian operations. Munro-Ferguson called upon the Colonial Office to discuss the problem with the Ministry of Shipping. The Australians were anxious that if the free passage scheme was terminated at the end of 1920 hardly any advantage would have accrued. Consequently, they put tremendous pressure on Amery to extend the scheme.<sup>63</sup> It was Australian pressure in concert with British domestic considerations which gave Amery the leverage to make the Treasury agree to extend the scheme for another year. When it was terminated at the end of 1921, it was Australia that received the largest share of British ex-servicemen, their wives and families. Of the final total of 86,027, Australia received 37,576 or 43%.<sup>64</sup>

#### SECTION 6.4: COMMONWEALTH VERSUS STATES' RIGHTS

Australia proved the most energetic and yet at the same time the most frustrating Dominion with which the British government had to deal. Unlike Canada, Australia did not have a paternalistic and centralised immigration or land settlement administration. Furthermore, it failed to develop a national soldier settlement or economic development

strategy. In London, both the Commonwealth and the States possessed their own individual immigration offices and conducted separate propaganda campaigns to attract prospective settlers. Lack of cooperation and coordination between the States and the Commonwealth led to fierce competition. Friction increased as wealthier States like New South Wales and Victoria offered larger inducements and enticed more immigrants to the detriment of their weaker, poorer and less organised rivals. The same was true within Australia itself. The lack of inter-State cooperation and the unnecessary competition between the States and Commonwealth spoilt any chance of formulating a harmonious national land settlement policy.<sup>65</sup>

Attempts were made in 1920 to rationalise the selection process in London and the immigration procedure in general. At the Premiers' Conferences held in Melbourne in May and July, Prime Minister Hughes hammered out a series of proposals, approved by the State representatives and implemented by Millen during a trip to London later that year. The Commonwealth would have full control of immigration operations overseas which included administration and organisation of transport facilities. The Commonwealth also assumed full financial responsibility. The primary objective was to settle these immigrants on the land in large settlement projects with the backing of the Imperial government. The Australian Agents-General in London would form a consultative committee to coordinate efforts between the States and Commonwealth. Upon arrival in Australia the States assumed complete responsibility for the settlement and employment of the immigrants; the definite and detailed financial arrangements of which would be negotiated between State and Commonwealth authorities.<sup>66</sup>

The immigration agreement of 1920 was a victory for Hughes in his battle with the States over control of immigration policy. He followed up this success with another in 1921 when he succeeded in pressing for Commonwealth control of loan money in agreements negotiated between Australia and Britain under the Empire Settlement Act. Proponents of States' rights grew anxious as they feared that the relationship between immigration and farm settlement forged by Hughes was a ploy to gain control over land policy, which was strictly a State jurisdiction.<sup>67</sup> The incident harked back to Hughes's bullying tactics at the Premiers' Conference of 1916. These fears and anxieties increased as the Commonwealth and State governments became embroiled over the question of increased funding for the soldier settlement programme in 1920 and 1921.

At the conference of Commonwealth and State ministers held in Melbourne in October-November 1921 the States were accused by Senator Millen of evading their responsibility to ordinary settlement which they had shouldered willingly prior to the war. 'They have been making it all soldier settlement, and looking to the Commonwealth for an undue proportion of the financial responsibility associated with it', he declared.<sup>68</sup> This angered the Minister of Lands for New South Wales, P. F. Loughlin, whose State was singled out by Millen as backward because it had fulfilled only 75% of its soldier settlement quota. Loughlin countered by stating that if the Commonwealth wanted to share in the control of soldier settlement policy it had to share some of the responsibility and not just simply act as the financial broker. Hughes tried to calm the troubled waters and stated that the Commonwealth did not want to 'poach on State preserves'. However,

...we want to have a fair and reasonable proposition from the States. We must guarantee that the money will be used for the purpose for which it is borrowed. The Commonwealth will borrow the money, and therefore the Commonwealth must have some system of joint control.<sup>69</sup>

The reason for Hughes's request was the mounting cost of soldier settlement. The original figure of £28 million agreed upon in 1916 to settle 21,000 veterans at £500 per soldier settler had risen to £35 million and 23,000 men at £625 per man by 1919. During the 1920 conference the subsidy was raised to £48 million to assist 36,000 veterans at £1,000 each.

What of the British ex-servicemen? The news was not good. Because of the increased expenditure Hughes announced that the Commonwealth would not now subsidise British ex-servicemen in Australian soldier settlement projects. He argued that it was unfair owing to the present financial uncertainties for these men to travel thousands of miles under promises that the Australian government could not fulfil. However, those men who had arrived or were coming under arrangements previously made would be treated under existing legislation. Millen reiterated this point in the Australian Senate in late 1921. The government's primary obligation was to meet the demand of Australian veterans. Until that obligation was fulfilled, warned Millen, Australia would be extremely cautious about making 'indiscriminate promises even to our cousins from the Old Country'.<sup>70</sup> What of the promise made to

Haggard in 1916 asked Premier Lawson of Victoria? 'Fair and nebulous words, that is all', replied Millen.<sup>71</sup> The onus therefore remained on the States to decide how many British ex-servicemen they wanted to assist.

As in Canada, Australians soon complained about the number of ex-Imperials who arrived physically unfit and unable to undertake employment of any kind. Reports emerged that several State authorities were not looking after the ex-Imperials as promised. 'So many of the men you have sent out are wandering the streets here workless and destitute', pleaded a representative of the Imperial Service Men's Association to the Colonial Office, 'that something ought to be done'.<sup>72</sup> Some Australians began to wonder about the wisdom of the free passage scheme, and as the depression of 1920-22 deepened and unemployment rose steadily popular opposition to assisted immigrants, particularly in the trade union movement, hardened.

#### SECTION 6.5: PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND SCANDAL IN VICTORIA

Assistance under the free passage scheme stopped at the end of 1921, although people were allowed to sail up and until March 1923 provided their applications had been submitted prior to the December 1921 deadline. However, this did not stop British ex-servicemen from coming to Australia nor did it prevent them from participating in specific settlement schemes. There were two particularly scandalous schemes, one initiated by the private company Australian Farms Limited (AFL) and the other by the Victorian government. Settlers were enticed to a land which promised easy returns, bountiful harvests and some of the best supervision, settler support and aftercare possible. Instead, they found an ill-equipped company which had no idea of how to run a settlement operation. Even worse, they encountered an uncaring, uncooperative State government. The majority of settlers experienced years of hardship and deprivation. Despite the award of compensation for most participants in 1933, it was a hollow victory compared to the tragic circumstances these people had endured.

Headquartered in Melbourne and founded after the war, the AFL wanted to tap, what it thought, was an excellent type of settler---the public school man and the British ex-officer with limited capital. Its secretary, R. V. Billis, was despatched to London in late 1919 to seek

moral and financial support not only from the Imperial government, but from British shipping and banking interests in Australia, the small but influential Imperial Ex-Officers' Association and the Public Schools' Association.<sup>73</sup>

The AFL's settlement strategy was twofold. Openings were available in Victoria for 100 ex-officers on prepared fruit growing allotments under irrigation. Applicants were required to possess a minimum of £500 and accept company supervision until they were well established on their holding. The company also reserved the right to decide what types of fruit tree and vine were planted on at least 40% of each holding and controlled the type of instruction each settler received. The AFL stated that these measures were necessary to ensure the production of sufficient quantities of specific fruit on a regular basis. Provisions were also made by the company for the packing and marketing of produce. Similarly, it maintained that it would cooperate closely with its clients, and that so far as it was possible, not interfere with the interests of individual settlers.<sup>74</sup>

The cost of a fifteen acre plot was £1,275 of which £700 was due in the first six months of operation. The remainder was due over a period of twenty years at no more than 7% interest. The company recognised that it took at least three years for a holding to start bearing fruit, therefore it decided to advance the sum of £75 per annum for living expenses to each settler for a period of three years. Applicants were reminded that they were eligible for assistance under the Victorian soldier settlement scheme.<sup>75</sup>

The second part of the AFL's settlement operation was wool production and sheep fattening on large grazing areas established in Victoria and New South Wales. Similar plans were afoot to expand grazing operations into South and Western Australia. The minimum capital requirement was £1,500 with each estate accommodating between ten and twenty-five men. A skilled supervisor was allocated to each estate and the company agreed to supply the equipment, buy and sell stock, arrange for shearing, wool grading and packing. It was estimated that each settler could operate between 600 and 800 sheep. A series of financial arrangements and repayment schedules were outlined including a supervision fee of £50 per annum.<sup>76</sup>

Billis succeeded in getting the backing of the Ex-Officers' Association who committed £12,500 to the venture. In May the joint committee of the OSC and the National Relief Fund (a fund raised from

public subscriptions during the war to help people who suffered material damage as a result of war) earmarked £25,000 for the benefit of ex-servicemen accepted by the company.<sup>77</sup> Billis was pleased. Sir George Murray, a member of the National Relief Fund was not. He pointed out that the Fund had exposed itself to criticism in which a grant had been made to a company whose business it was to make a profit. He quickly denied responsibility on the grounds that he was absent when the decision was made.

The Treasury voiced its displeasure on the same grounds and emphasised the importance for the OSC not to commit the government to the scheme in anyway. Macnaghten replied testily that it was satisfying to know that the Treasury was taking an active interest in OSC business. He tried to reassure it, however, that the company commanded an exceptional measure of support throughout Australia. Among its 'special sponsors' was W. A. Watt, the Commonwealth Treasurer.<sup>78</sup> As Amery informed the shipping magnate, Lord Inchcape, Billis and Watt represented the 'Imperial School of thought in Australia which is engaged in combatting the powerful Bolshevik and Sinn Fein elements' in the Dominion.<sup>79</sup> Here was a crucial admission. Amery and the OSC were favourably inclined to the company not simply because of its settlement plans but because of the political implications involved. Macnaghten reinforced this idea.

It is generally recognised that the extreme labour, Sinn Fein and Catholic elements are a serious menace in Australia. We may hope - and there is some evidence - that the extremists are losing ground there as here. The OSC hope that a forward settlement policy may have a considerable effect in weakening the extreme elements.<sup>80</sup>

Billis left Britain in July 1920 thoroughly satisfied with the support and cooperation he had received. The first group of four settlers arrived in Western Australia in September. At first, the State government was not very receptive to the idea of a private company encroaching on what it believed was a government responsibility. J. D. Connolly, Agent-General for Western Australia, thought the money was better spent through a Dominion government rather than a private company no matter how altruistic its motives. Why should a company receive preferential treatment over a sovereign state? These objections were quickly cast aside as Premier Mitchell, with a modicum of pressure from



Governor Newdegate, welcomed the advent of the company and assured it that the government would assist its operations in every possible way.<sup>81</sup>

It was in Victoria, however, where the company laid its most ambitious plans establishing two types of settlement for two different groups of ex-officer. The settlements at Melville Forest, Leslie Manor and Kongbool were set up as cooperative sheep stations designed to attract ex-officers from the Indian Army. With assistance from the Imperial government and the Ex-Officers Association a fruit-growing settlement was established at Tresco West aimed at settling ex-officers from the British Army.<sup>82</sup>

It was in 1921 that Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, first approached the AFL concerning the settlement of surplus India Army officers in Victoria. Both the company and the Victorian government were eager to attract these men. They were young, healthy, well-educated and possessed the necessary financial means. For the Victorian authorities these officers were a particularly important source because they would be the foundation of a new and ambitious settlement programme currently under negotiation with the British government. Major Alan Currie, a retired officer and a director of the AFL, was despatched to India on behalf of the company and with the tacit approval of the Victorian government. His mission was to travel to all the major military centres in India to generate interest and promote the benefits of settlement in Victoria, and, as a trial exercise, recruit a minimum of 200 settlers.<sup>83</sup>

Currie's mission was a success for not only did he catch the attention of retiring officers but succeeded in attracting a number still on active service. For its part, the Victorian government agreed to make land available to the settlers through the AFL. The company undertook to provide housing, stock, implements and training for a three-year period. It guaranteed that the settlement estates were well watered and possessed all the necessary out buildings, fencing and other suitable improvements. Furthermore, 'no land will be offered which has not been inspected and approved by the Company whose Directors are experts in land values. Under this scheme settlers are not only assured of a first-class training, but will receive returns from the outset'. The ease with which settlers could turn an immediate profit was substantiated by Currie who proclaimed that settlers were assured to make between £500 and £1,000 per annum.<sup>84</sup>

Currie returned to Melbourne to discover that in fact the Victorian government had failed to honour its promises and had not acquired the properties as arranged. The situation was urgent as the first group of settlers were due to arrive in September 1922. The government immediately offered to purchase alternative properties two of which were distinctly inferior to the original estates of Woollongoon and Challicum. The government admitted that the substitute estates of Melville Forest and Kongbool could support only one sheep for every three acres as opposed much better figures for the original estates. Currie explained the grim situation to the settlers, admitting that the land was not that which he had based his projections, and understood if they refused it.<sup>85</sup> The men, however, had been handed a fait accompli. They had invested heavily, committing most if not all of their compensatory gratuity in the form of a bond to the company. They certainly could not return to the army in light of Britain's commitment to military retrenchment. What choice did they have but to stick it out?

The estates were hurriedly purchased in late November 1922 but they were not subdivided into individual allotments until June 1923. When they were at last subdivided the Victorian government charged each settler an adjustment fee of £200 stating that until the allotment was surveyed the land was still the property of the government. The settlers cried foul but the stubborn W. McIver, state director of the Closer Settlement Board (CSB), ignored them.<sup>86</sup> There was another setback. Though it was originally envisaged as a joint venture, the Victorian government was forced to withdraw its support shortly afterwards. An amendment to the Closer Settlement Act of 1922, enacted in 1923, precluded the Victorian government from cooperating with any private organisation in connection with settlement work. This turn of events severely hampered the company's efforts and forced it to limit its operations to land already acquired. It was an ominous start to what became an ill-fated venture.

During the three-year period in which the AFL administered the cooperative-based sheep rearing estates there were profits to be shared but not at the levels originally envisaged by Currie. The price of wool had remained high and because a return was generated the settlements were considered a success. Problems surfaced immediately, however, when the company's agreement expired and the estates were dissolved. Buoyant wool markets had disguised the fact that the settlers had not acquired

the proper practical experience in sheep raising and breeding, and therefore they could not cope. The subsequent drop in wool prices compounded the hardship and destitution.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the AFL was liquidated shortly after the termination of its agreement in 1926. The Victorian government agreed to place the settlers under the supervision of the CSB but for those who had survived enough was enough. Many felt that they could not work with or under the draconian CSB, refused the government's terms and left. Others sought compensation.

Take the case of ex-India Army Captain B. Godly, a Melville Forest settler. It took the company eight months at considerable personal expense to the young settler before he was put on his holding. He testified to the ridiculous adjustment charges the State government insisted on extracting from its new settlers. It was these fees, according to Godly, that were the single largest cause of disappointment among the ex-India Army settlers. This fostered bitter resentment among the settlers who grew frustrated because they had no way of airing their grievances. Even more galling was their characterisation in certain sections of the Australian press: 'We are dubbed by certain rags as "Society pets", morning coated Farmers etc., whilst Cartoons have appeared of us in Silk hats dipping sheep and so on'.<sup>88</sup>

Similar complaints were voiced by settlers at Kongbool, probably the poorest and worst off of the three AFL sheep properties. The acreage was just too small to support the number of settlers and their stock. Holdings were abandoned and those settlers who remained eked out a living, all the while complaining that the pledges given at the time of their settlement, in particular advance preparation, had not been fulfilled.<sup>89</sup> At Leslie Manor, established as a mixed farming proposition, settlers were in a similar predicament and testified to the inadequacies of the scheme. Captain C. R. Jessop was struck by the AFL's determination to push the Melville Forest operation and ignore the promotion of Leslie Manor. In his opinion, Leslie Manor was better situated for sheep rearing because the general quality of the land was better. His criticisms were directed at the company. There was no organised system of instruction or demonstration and the settlement had not been prepared in advance. The estate's management left much to be desired as well. For example, the first manager on the estate was ignorant of cultivation techniques, was unable to adjust a plough or a reaper and binder. The second manager was incompetent and lost 100 sheep in one day by dipping them in unfavourable weather. The third

manager was no better. When entrusted by Jessop to purchase 500 sheep he returned with a shipment of tick-infested animals which had to be dipped out of season at the risk of considerable loss.<sup>90</sup> Although Jessop admitted that he was lucky to have selected a good allotment he was one of the first settlers to leave once his property had been revalued.

The fruit irrigated farming operation at Tresco West suffered a similar fate. It was described by one Victorian MLA, F. E. Old, an experienced farmer who championed the cause of many impoverished soldier farmers, as 'one of the most ghastly failures perpetrated on unsuspecting settlers'.<sup>91</sup> As with wool, the markets for fruit were extremely depressed. This was compounded by the fact that orchards needed time to mature. Therefore, the financial burden proved enormous in the early stages of fruit farming because it involved a large injection of capital with little or no return. But the area was unsuitable for profitable fruit production. In 1925 the majority report of the Victorian Royal Commission on soldier settlement blamed poor drainage as the reason for low citrus yield in the region. Old went further in his condemnation of the project. The entire settlement was unsuitable for irrigation because of the soil's high salinity. It may have been a legitimate endeavour, argued Old, but it was a proposition founded on the wrong principles. The AFL directors knew nothing of land settlement, in particular irrigation, and therefore never gave their clients a proper chance. Another problem was poor supervision and management. By March 1927 only twenty-two of the original sixty-two ex-British Army officers were still settled or employed on Tresco West in rural occupations. Twenty-one had left their holdings for more secure employment in business and commerce, five had returned to Britain, three had emigrated to New Zealand, four had joined the Royal Australian Air Force and the local constabulary, six had disappeared and one was dead.<sup>92</sup> The situation in Victoria worsened.

In 1923 Victoria embarked upon its own overly ambitious project to establish 10,000 British settlers on their own farms. The scheme aimed to attract men who possessed approximately £1,000 of their own capital and the Victorian government once again looked to India for potential investors. The projected cost, excluding passage, was £3 million. The Commonwealth government raised the loan and the interest was shared equally between the Imperial, federal and State governments. The first stage of the programme was to settle 2,000 immigrants and their

dependents. State authorities estimated that it would have to provide an additional £1,500 per farm in the way of loans repayable under generous terms. The settlers were promised complete financial control of their own money and twelve months practical experience before taking over their holding.<sup>93</sup>

The scheme was an absolute fiasco. Only 814 British settlers, of which 75% were ex-servicemen, entered Australia between 1923 and 1927. After examining the districts where land was available, 455 decided not to embark upon the venture.<sup>94</sup> The biggest complaint was that the price of land was too high and that there was not much freedom of choice. Fears were raised by William Bankes Amery, Britain's migration representative in Australia (1925-28), that British settlers tended to receive blocks of land rejected or abandoned by native Australians. His claim was substantiated as more complaints arrived condemning the land as uneconomic, second rate and unsuitable for agriculture. Of the remaining 361, only a paltry fifty achieved partial success.<sup>95</sup>

Some settler accounts have survived giving a startling picture of what many ex-officers in this particular scheme encountered. In September 1923 Frank Thompson, a former lieutenant in the Royal Engineers, settled on the Red Cliffs estate, a soldier settlement scheme originally established for Australian veterans. The land was over-valued, not properly drained and therefore unsuitable for fruit farming. Thompson charged that he did not receive equal treatment and did not receive wages during the first two years of operation. The four acres planted in citrus yielded nothing but poor returns and an £800 deficit. The remaining twelve acres were much more promising but only because Thompson, at enormous expense, drained the land. Land purchased at £20 per acre had cost an additional £15 per acre to drain.

And what had he achieved? In four years he had produced sixty-eight and one-half tons of dried fruit, twenty-five tons of currants and forty-three and one-half tons of sultanas. He had worked the holding for six years and estimated that his financial return over the same period was a mere £120. However, all he had to show for his hard work and determination was a bank statement showing a debit of £500. During 1927-28 the state Board of Inquiry visited his holding and agreed that it was over-capitalised and advised revaluation. The absurd part of the revaluation process, according to Thompson, was that one of the valuers was a former area supervisor who had given him a steady stream of misleading advice. Even more damning was Thompson's claim that during

the three years Mr. Brynes was area supervisor he had visited him once for three minutes! For a State that prided itself on its claims of expert advice and close supervision this was indeed damaging. Thompson's censure, however, was against the conduct of certain individuals and he admitted that he found no specific reason to complain against the Victorian government.<sup>96</sup>

Another ex-officer, W. H. Voyle, certainly had grounds to complain. He arrived in the wheat growing Mallee district in 1925, an area targeted for soldier settlement during the war. It became painfully obvious to him that the area could not grow wheat in sufficient quantities, 'and that the settlers had been made the victims of an unjustifiable and disastrous experiment'. He charged that the Victorian government was guilty of 'a colossal blunder and sheer incompetence' and that they had deliberately gambled with the lives of innocent men, women and children. Similarly, he insisted that the State government bear the costs - moral, legal and financial - of official misrepresentation and inefficiency. Voyle was not alone in his condemnations.<sup>97</sup>

Charges of misrepresentation and breach of faith were levelled against the Victorian government by the remaining survivors of both the AFL and government schemes. Legal proceedings were launched in 1927 with the full support and backing of the British and Indian governments. Victoria's Governor, Baron Somers, reported to the Dominions Office that nothing short of a Royal Commission would solve the parlous state of affairs in Victoria.<sup>98</sup> But he warned his superiors that it was not going to be easy to resolve the matter as the State politicians had quickly absolved themselves from any responsibility on the grounds that some of the ex-officer settlements were conducted under the auspices of a private company and outside the parameters of the Empire Settlement Act. If there was to be an investigation into the entire gamut of settlement issues in Victoria, explained McIver of the CSB, it was strictly a State matter. The Imperial and Commonwealth governments were politely told *it was none of their business*.<sup>99</sup>

Pressure for a full and impartial enquiry mounted throughout 1927 and 1928. Governor Somers reported that the new Labor government was growing increasingly uncomfortable under the strain of persistent pressure, and the unpopular McIver was doing his utmost to wriggle out of the sticky situation. Determined to press home the claims of British ex-officers, both Somers and Bankes Amery refused to give up. Lord

Lovat, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Dominions, was equally adamant that the matter be properly and carefully investigated and that a satisfactory conclusion be obtained. He reminded them: 'the complete failure of this scheme would have unfortunate repercussions on the migration to Australia as a whole'.<sup>100</sup> However, the damage to future assisted migration programmes had already been done. By 1927 animosity ran so high that according to one Colonial Office report the Labor governments of Victoria and New South Wales were 'anxious to hinder British settlement in Australia'.<sup>101</sup>

In the face of mounting pressure the Victorian government finally relented and appointed a board of inquiry to investigate the complaints of the ex-Indian Army officers. Somers was far from satisfied. He cabled London that the membership of the board of inquiry was weighted heavily in favour of the CSB. When the inquiry's findings were completed its report indicated a strong claim for compensation against the State government. Unfortunately for the settlers the board had no power to make recommendations and it looked like the issue was going to be shelved.<sup>102</sup> Disappointed, Somers maintained the pressure on the Labor Premier E. J. Hogan to take more direct action and appoint a Royal Commission. The government remained intransigent and ignored the pleas for compensation on behalf of the settlers.

It was not until Hogan regained the premiership in December 1929 that constructive steps were taken. In 1930 a Royal Commission was finally appointed, although the actual recommendations were carried out by a Nationalist government. In its report released in 1933 it found that of the 311 complaints all but seventeen were justified. The findings were willingly accepted by the State government and compensation was paid to 284 claimants, of whom 116 promptly returned to Britain. The cost of settling fifty British settlers and compensating approximately 300 more was an astronomical £5 million.<sup>103</sup>

What had gone wrong with Australian soldier settlement and the attempts to establish a permanent and productive landed imperial yeomanry? Economic factors played a key role. Fuelled by wartime speculation and post-war inflation the States were forced to buy land at extremely high prices. Compounding the problem was the shortage of livestock, building materials and farm equipment which raised operating costs. Those soldier settlers who were encouraged to settle in fruit-growing areas or irrigation settlements had the extra burden of having to buy specialised equipment for which they had no training. Besides

the need for additional capital, the problem with these types of settlement was that it took longer for settlers to realise a return on their investment when compared to soldier settlers who took up grain farming or sheep rearing. But it was the depression of 1920-22 which exposed the vulnerability of the entire policy. Administrators incorrectly assumed that the prices for primary products would remain buoyant throughout the initial stages of soldier settlement allowing the settler to reap the benefits of high prices and establish his operations on a strong footing. However, plummeting commodity prices hit many soldier settlers just as they were moving into full production. The result was that the soldier settlers were caught in a vicious cost-price squeeze which forced many to abandon their farms and ensured the survivors a long period of indebtedness.<sup>104</sup>

Many of the settlers were hopelessly unsuited for the heavy manual labour required. The rush to satisfy as many applicants as quickly as possible led to poor settler selection. Veterans returned from Europe with a variety of physical and mental disorders which recurred or were aggravated by intense physical exertion. The British veterans had the added handicap of trying to farm in a foreign, often hostile environment with new and different techniques. The root of the problem, however, was the haste, lack of forethought and unpreparedness with which Australia's soldier settlement policy was implemented. Munro-Ferguson's assessment that the Australian government's lack of pre-planning would slow down the repatriation process and hamper post-war reconstruction was correct. In 1925 the Victorian government, in its report of the Royal Commission on soldier settlement, admitted that it was 'common knowledge that there was a great rush of returned men in 1919 and 1920, and the machinery for handling them was taxed to the breaking point'.<sup>105</sup> What was worse for the British ex-service settlers was that they arrived at the peak of the screening process, adding to the strain, and at the time when land prices were at their highest. The promises of expert supervision and agricultural training never materialised. There was a glaring absence of a variety of preparatory scientific surveys on land reserved for soldier settlement. This resulted in the development of marginal land by inexperienced settlers with little or no knowledge of soil conditions, climate, drainage and other physical, seasonal or economic characteristics of the settlement region.<sup>106</sup>

The blame for the 'failure' of Australia's soldier settlement



policy must lay with the Commonwealth and State governments. The decentralised nature of Australia's soldier settlement administration which led to the constant bickering over areas of Commonwealth-State jurisdiction, and the States' parasitic attitude toward Commonwealth subsidies 'exposed the fragility of [Australia's] immature federal system'.<sup>107</sup> The degree of responsibility between the two levels of government was never confirmed, and according to Justice Pike's report of 1929 which examined the losses due to soldier settlement, it remained confused and unclear.<sup>108</sup> The rationale behind the entire policy also became confused. What had begun as a debt of gratitude became an expensive and politically motivated exercise to create another sturdy yeoman class on Australian soil. In reality, the attempt to establish a new yeomanry in Australia was based on romantic illusions of the past generated by over-optimistic and misplaced assumptions of the potential of the returned man.<sup>109</sup>

What of the imperial element? Australia proved to be as enthusiastic as the rest of the empire in its attempt to resettle British ex-servicemen. But its eagerness to participate also highlighted and reinforced Australia's dependence on British investment and the closer, less diversified commercial relationship between the two countries. According to sketchy official sources, Australia settled more British ex-servicemen than any other Dominion, between one and two thousand, but at a greater financial and social cost.<sup>110</sup> As well, its insistence that land alone held the key to continued prosperity and its refusal to give up the yeoman ideal made for some very extravagant experiments in the face of a changing imperial relationship. It was an expensive and trying lesson.

## ENDNOTES

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28. CPP, 1914-15-19-17, V, no. 299, Conference of Commonwealth and State Governments 17-19 February 1916, Report of Debates, pp. 11-3, p. 28; Lake, pp. 32-6.

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109. Glynn, 'Agricultural Development in Western Australia', p. 138; Powell, 'The Mapping of "Soldier Settlement"', p. 47; Fry, p. 43.

110. Western Australia recorded 403 ex-Imperials who had participated in its various settlement schemes. Of these only 235 remained on the land by 1925. Despite aggressive advertising, Queensland received only thirty-nine of an expected 1,600 ex-Imperials. In Victoria rough estimates put their figure between six to eight hundred. Figures are not available for the remaining States. Western Australia Parliamentary Papers, 1925, I, no. 5, Report of the Royal Commission on Group Settlements, xxviii; D. J. Murphy, R. B. Joyce and Colin A. Hughes, eds., Labor in Power: The Labor Party and Governments in Queensland 1915-57 (St. Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1980), p. 228; Victorian estimates were gathered from archival papers and McDonald, 'Victoria's Immigration Scandal'.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### NEW ZEALAND: A MOST DISAPPOINTING RESULT

Like her sister Dominions New Zealand witnessed several small-scale experiments in military colonisation prior to 1914. In 1851 the Imperial government decided that it would be advantageous to grant special land concessions to those retired British officers who had participated in the internecine conflict with the Maoris, a fiercely proud and warlike native people. The policy's main objective was the improvement of the colony's internal security through the settlement of these men in areas where the native population was disaffected. Agricultural development and the use of scrip as a payment for services rendered were also used to justify the settlement policy but in reality they were of secondary importance. Security remained the paramount objective. The Maoris were seen as a constant source of trouble by the settlers throughout the 1850s and 1860s. This resulted in the enactment of a series of regulations designed to entice retiring military and naval personnel to stay and settle in the colony, principally on the North Island. In all, 7,692 military and naval personnel were awarded land grants under the multifarious provisions established between 1851 and 1892.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after the Boer War intense pressure was exerted upon the New Zealand government to give preferential treatment to those veterans wanting to farm upon their return. The opponents of Prime Minister Seddon's government argued that an excellent opportunity existed for settling healthy, eager veterans who were prepared to venture limited amounts of capital in agriculture. Critics warned that such an opportunity should not be squandered because the moral fibre of these valiant men was at stake. 'Such a policy would be far better than allowing them to knock about the hotels, drinking bad whiskey...and knocking their cheques down, or competing with the workers of the city for employment'.<sup>2</sup> Even more galling for the opposition members were advertisements in English newspapers offering two million acres of freehold land to intending British immigrants when no land was available for returning New Zealand veterans. 'These young men had been appealing

to the Government for land, but could not get it, and here was the Government pushing land on people in the United Kingdom who had not asked for it, and perhaps did not want it at all'.<sup>3</sup> Seddon was unmoved and no preferential treatment was given to New Zealand veterans.

The most patriotic and 'British' of the Dominions, New Zealand was the first Dominion to initiate and enact soldier settlement legislation in October 1915. The Discharged Soldier Settlement Act empowered the Minister of Finance to raise £50,000 for settlement purposes. In a series of amendments between 1916 and 1919 the initial sum was increased to £1.5 million. The Bill was to provide for two types of soldier, those who returned fit and well and those who returned partially disabled but able to do light farm work. Legislators envisaged settlement on Crown land and on land obtained by the government under the Land for Settlement Act of 1908. In 1917 an amendment was passed extending financial assistance to soldier settlers to help them clear, fence and drain land. It also provided them with assistance to purchase private farm land and gave the Minister of Lands authority to reserve land in urban areas for the construction of veterans' housing. More importantly, soldier settlers were not allowed to transfer lands acquired under the scheme for ten years, except with the permission of the local Land Board and the Minister of Lands. The measure was incorporated to add an element of stability and prevent them from selling their holdings to hungry land speculators eager to turn a quick profit and benefit from wartime inflation.<sup>4</sup>

W. F. Massey's Reform government, which was heavily dependent upon rural support, was wholeheartedly committed to helping the returned man. And its quick legislative response was proof of its intent. When the Prime Minister, in his dual capacity as Minister of Lands, introduced the 1915 legislation, he equated New Zealand's efforts with those of ancient Rome. Just as the Roman legionnaire possessed the patriotic traditions of Rome, claimed Massey, it was New Zealand's soldier citizens who were the modern day heirs to those most noble and democratic ideals.<sup>5</sup> There was a great deal of discussion and support for the soldier settlement legislation right across the New Zealand political spectrum. However, numerous speakers warned that the land had to be purchased at a fair and decent price. They did not want the soldiers to be always dependent on borrowed money. Nor did they want to see these men gouged by profiteers demanding high prices for land that could make any type of settlement prohibitive.<sup>6</sup>

Land settlement was a prominent feature of party politics in New Zealand, and after World War I was seen as an indispensable component of its reconstruction strategy. In this respect, official attitudes were similarly centralist to those of their Canadian counterparts, and like Australia involved the active support of the local conservative orientated Agricultural and Pastoral Associations. Sir Francis Bell, who administered New Zealand's land policy during several of Massey's absences in London during the war, was especially aware of the government's responsibility. He steadfastly refused to open up any Crown land which was suitable for civilian settlement, insisting that it be reserved for ex-servicemen.<sup>7</sup> In 1919-20 soldier settlement reached its peak. Prior to demobilisation, approximately 1,700 ex-servicemen were authorised to settle on 508,000 acres at a cost of £1.15 million. Two years later the government responded to veteran demand and settled 9,041 ex-servicemen on 3.1 million acres at a cost of £12 million. Despite the enormous expenditure, argues one observer, the Massey government failed to cope with the volume of returning veterans, exposing it to hostile attacks from the press, the New Zealand Farmers' Union and an impatient New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association (NZRSA).<sup>8</sup>

These critics bitterly complained that the government was wasting money buying cultivated land at highly inflated prices when large areas of Crown land remained undeveloped. Indeed, the scale of land speculation in New Zealand during World War I was frenetic. It was estimated that one-half of the rural land in the Dominion changed hands between 1916 and 1924.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, what was the government to do? Crown land suitable for agricultural development was scattered, isolated and scarce. Committed to reserving its meagre land resources to New Zealand veterans, Massey's government was forced to buy private land at prices inflated by wartime speculation in order to meet veteran demand. Clearly, Massey's administration faced a dilemma. It was a conflict between the government's desire to take advantage of the agricultural prosperity fostered by secure wartime markets, on the one hand, and the huge financial burden of buying land at grossly inflated prices, on the other.<sup>10</sup>

What were the implications for British ex-servicemen wanting to emigrate after the war? The granting of equal treatment to ex-Imperialists was restricted by New Zealand's limited resources and its commitment to its own troops. Only after these claims had been honoured was the New

Zealand government willing to consider applications from British veterans. During the Haggard mission Massey reiterated this point. Haggard recorded that Massey was most sympathetic and generally eager to help but far from definite on the form or substance of the assistance.<sup>11</sup> When hostilities ended and the free passage scheme was formulated the New Zealand government once again stressed its desire to help British ex-servicemen settle in New Zealand on the same terms as New Zealand veterans, but only after New Zealand claims had been satisfied. Furthermore, it would not allow the conveyance of British ex-servicemen to New Zealand until all New Zealand troops had been repatriated. And at that point, it warned there was a strong possibility that there would be no government land available beyond the needs of domestic requirements.<sup>12</sup>

A shortage of shipping throughout 1920-21 further aggravated a frustrating situation for prospective British ex-service migrants and a Dominion keen on restocking its Anglo-Saxon heritage. There was another, even more serious problem: a severe housing shortage in 1920 that threatened to stifle all British migration to the Dominion. The problem became more acute in 1921 as the world's economy slumped, inflation spiralled and unemployment sharply increased. In March 1921, the Massey government informed the OSC that after examining New Zealand's commercial, industrial and financial outlook in relation to the depressed labour market, the free passage scheme would have to be curtailed. The OSC was instructed 'that no approved Imperial Overseas Settlement applicant, whether single or married, be allowed to proceed to New Zealand unless employment and accommodation await him on arrival'.<sup>13</sup> This was a critical blow to those who advocated an unrestricted 'white' immigration policy. There was unrelenting hostility in some sections of New Zealand society, including elements of the NZRSA towards the entry and influx of Asiatics. And equally strident warnings from the same quarters that from a racial and strategic viewpoint to limit the flow of immigrants from Britain was extremely dangerous, unnecessary and unpatriotic.<sup>14</sup> Cooler heads prevailed, however. After a vigorous debate at the 1922 NZRSA annual conference the association agreed to support the government's temporary restriction of the free passage scheme. The recent dumping of hundreds of unemployed, homeless and destitute ex-Imperials in Auckland emphasised the necessity for such action. Confident that the economic downturn was a passing phase, the NZRSA endorsed the government's

policy.<sup>15</sup> At the conclusion of the free passage scheme New Zealand had received 15.5% or 13,349 British ex-servicemen and their families.<sup>16</sup>

Land offered for civilian settlement remained limited throughout 1921 as New Zealand authorities maintained their policy of preference for the returned man. However, there were signs that the demand by ex-servicemen, especially for pastoral properties, was slackening. The fall in wool and mutton prices made soldier settlement less attractive thereby allowing the government to throw open previously reserved areas to civilian settlement. By January 1922 there was little demand for any class of farm land by ex-servicemen and the proclamations which had reserved these specific settlement areas were annulled. The worsening depression, however, made civilian settlement less attractive and the disposal of the previously reserved 340,000 acres difficult.<sup>17</sup>

The depression of 1920-22 and the consequent fall in prices of primary produce severely tested the resolve and determination of the bulk of the settlers, particularly the pastoralists. The government found it necessary to postpone soldiers' rent payments and give interest relief on their mortgages. However, it confidently expected prices would recover in the near future and it was willing to temporarily forego payments due from soldier settlers in an attempt to relieve the financial pressure. The NZRSA were far from satisfied and demanded a full inquiry into the plight of the soldier settlers. As the number of distressed cases multiplied and agricultural prices failed to recover the government appointed special Boards of Inquiry in 1923 to report on the matter.<sup>18</sup>

The Boards of Inquiry conducted a comprehensive investigation but mistakenly concluded that the depression was the principal cause of settler failure. Well before its onset many soldier settlers were experiencing severe difficulties largely attributable to inflated land prices. The depression simply 'hastened and accentuated a process already begun'.<sup>19</sup> The New Zealand government remained steadfast in its determination to help the soldier settler and its response to the crisis was similar to that of the other Dominions. However, the generous gesture of postponing rent and interest payments during the depression, and keeping the number of foreclosures to an absolute minimum, was unheard of in the other Dominions. It was evident, however, that despite a most sympathetic stance a more permanent form of relief was needed. Led by the NZRSA, the cry went up for the initiation of revaluation proceedings. The Boards of Inquiry recommended it and the

government reacted quickly by establishing twenty-four district revaluation committees. Of the total of 5,347 who applied by mid-1925, 5,284 had been dealt with. In March 1928 reductions totalled £2.68 million.<sup>20</sup>

What was the final cost to the New Zealand government? The entire repatriation process cost New Zealand just over £31 million. The losses accrued to soldier settlement, including revaluations, remissions and outstanding debts, was £7 million or 25% of the total amount expended.<sup>21</sup> Despite these losses the government were satisfied with its 'success' on behalf of the returned soldier. The figures were certainly in line with those written off by Canada and Australia and as one commentator writes:

Considering the [New Zealand] Government's adoption of an ill-advised policy of settling soldiers on improved lands bought at inflated prices, and its insistence on carrying on with such policy despite widespread and constructive criticism; and taking into account the inefficient administration of this policy by the Lands Department, the inexperience of the soldier settlers, the faulty subdivision of many of the estates, the second class quality of much of the supposedly first class land, the inadequacy of financial advances, and finally the effects of the slump, it is quite remarkable that the loss of 25 per cent sustained by the Government was not much greater.<sup>22</sup>

And what of the British ex-service migrant? As far as soldier settlement is concerned he made no impact. Without the benefit of examining primary source material, this study must rely on the exhaustive and detailed soldier settlement reports compiled by the Department of Lands between 1921 and 1930, and these fail to record one case of a British soldier settler.<sup>23</sup> Therefore what happened to those who participated in the free passage scheme? When it was launched the New Zealand government emphasised that the greatest demand was for single female domestics and single male farm labourers. At first, families were encouraged to immigrate but the chronic housing shortage in 1920 forced the New Zealand authorities to discourage them from arriving. Instead, efforts were confined to the able-bodied single ex-servicemen both skilled and unskilled and the single woman or war widow without encumbrances to take up domestic service.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, its warning that New Zealand veterans received preferential treatment and placement on the land, and that it was highly unlikely that there was enough land to satisfy domestic requirements, no doubt intimidated all



but the most determined or financially independent British soldier settlers. Even then, it would have been a very small number indeed. Therefore, it must be assumed that the vast majority found employment in secondary and tertiary industries or as unskilled labour.

Likewise, New Zealanders soon complained that many of the British immigrants, in particular the ex-Imperials, arrived destitute and penniless adding to an already serious unemployment problem. Hence the government's curtailment of the free passage scheme except for those who had both assured employment and accommodation. Once these restrictions were in place very few British ex-servicemen embarked for New Zealand.<sup>25</sup> New Zealand's response to the free passage scheme was undoubtedly as patriotic as Canada's and Australia's. However, despite the fact that she was the third largest beneficiary under the scheme, the final results were exceedingly disappointing. Local economic conditions certainly had a quicker and more immediate impact on the government's repatriation programme than in the other Dominions and had more of a direct bearing on the fortunes of the British participants. Similarly, it demonstrated New Zealand's vulnerability to outside economic factors, its increased dependence on imperial trading links, especially the markets for its primary produce, and its lack of industrial diversification.<sup>26</sup> Finally, New Zealand's efforts to settle her own veterans on the land may have been a mixed success, but so far as being able to reinforce its landed yeomanry with an imperial component the policy was an absolute disaster.

## ENDNOTES

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3. Ibid., 1903, CXXVI, p. 265.
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5. Powell, 'Debt of Honour', p. 64.
6. NZPD, 1917, CLXXVIII, p. 247, p. 367; ibid., 1919, CLXXXIV, p. 343.
7. NZPD, 1917, CLXXVIII, p. 631; Mayhew, p. 24; Melling, p. 82; 'New Zealand I. Immigration', Round Table, XII (1921-22), pp. 913-17; M. Fairburn, 'The Rural Myth and the New Urban Frontier', New Zealand Journal of History, IX, 1 (April 1975), pp. 3-21. In October 1916, Lord Liverpool, Governor of New Zealand, informed Bonar Law that the Tuwharetoa tribe near Napier on the eastern coast of the North Island had reserved 25,000 acres of native land for Maoris veterans irrespective of the tribe or tribes they belonged. Both Liverpool and the British government were impressed with this patriotic gesture. PRO, CO 209/289/55606, Liverpool to Bonar Law, 5 October 1916. Maoris soldier settlement was discussed regularly in the New Zealand Parliament. For example, see NZPD, 1917, CLXXVIII, p. 731.
8. Mayhew, p. 136; Appendix. Journals of the House of Representatives (hereafter AJHR), 1921-22, C-9, pp. 1-2; PRO, CO 209/309/41033, Lord Jellicoe, Governor-General of New Zealand, to Churchill, Colonial Secretary, 11 July 1921; Melling, pp. 80-93; D. J. George, 'The Depression of 1921-22 in New Zealand', M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1969, pp. 146-70; M. R. Sharpe, 'Anzac Day in New Zealand 1916-1939', New Zealand Journal of History, XV, 2 (October 1981), pp. 97-114.
9. W. H. Oliver, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 232.
10. Melling, pp. 80-1; NZPD, 1921, CXCI, pp. 467-77 and pp. 630-1.
11. Oliver, p. 232; Haggard, After-War Settlement and Employment, pp. 22-4; Higgins, pp. 65-6; PRO, CO 532/84/33878, Liverpool to Bonar Law, 9 June 1916.

12. Turnor, Land Settlement, pp. 29-30; PRO, CO 721/5/f. 82, New Zealand government to J. Allen, New Zealand High Commissioner, 13 March 1919, tabled at meeting of OSC advisory committee, 14 March 1919; PRO, CO 209/303/24178, Liverpool to Milner, 31 March 1920.
13. PRO, CO 721/26/3825, Allen to Amery, 2 April 1921; CO 721/25/3825, Cameron to Plant, 30 March 1921.
14. Quick March, monthly magazine of the NZRSA, 10 March 1921, p. 36; ibid., 11 July 1921, p. 55, p. 57 and p. 59; P. S. O'Connor, 'Keeping New Zealand White, 1908-1920', New Zealand Journal of History, II, 1 (April 1968), pp. 47-65.
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16. Plant, p. 74.
17. PRO, CO 209/309/56217, Jellicoe to Churchill, 28 September 1921; CO 209/312/9200, ibid., 13 January 1922.
18. PRO, CO 209/312/9200, Jellicoe to Churchill, 13 January 1922; Jourdain, p. 48; AJHR, 1923, C-9a, p. 3.
19. AJHR, 1923, C-9, p. 5; George, pp. 160-3.
20. AJHR, 1924, C-9, p. 2; George, p. 167; 'New Zealand I. The Twenty-Second Session of Parliament', Round Table, XIV (1923-24), pp. 187-9.
21. George, p. 168.
22. George, pp. 169-70. Of all the Dominions, the quarterly secret reports from the New Zealand Governors-General between 1917 and 1930 provided some of the most informative and up-to-date material on land settlement, repatriation and immigration. Even after reserved lands had been thrown open to civilian settlement the statistical progress of New Zealand repatriation was maintained. Of particular interest are those of Governor-General C. Fergusson (1924-30). For example, see his quarterly secret reports between 1926 and 1930 in DO 35/4, 24, 48 and 69.
23. No statistics exist for British soldier settlers in the annual reports contained in the AJHR or the NZYB from 1921 to 1930 and 1915 to 1931 respectively.
24. National Archives of New Zealand (Wellington), L1 Burnt File, Box 130, 1920/533, memorandum by H. Thomson, Secretary, Immigration Department, to Minister of Immigration, 4 August 1920. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Stephen Constantine, Senior Lecturer at the University of Lancaster for the use of these sources and notes.
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## CONCLUSION

### FOREDOOMED TO FAILURE?

In a survey of the British government's migration policy conducted in 1930, the Overseas Settlement Department concluded that assisted migration since World War I had been 'fostered largely for social and political reasons, and that the economic aspects of it [had] been more or less secondary'.<sup>1</sup> This was undeniably true. Although important economic arguments were used to popularise and justify soldier settlement, free passage and empire settlement, it was the parallel objectives of political stability and social cohesion which lay at the root of these policies designed to reinforce the physical and emotional bonds of empire. Whereas strategic motives had governed the pursuit of military colonisation in the past, it was the political necessity of shoring up society's ramparts against the destructive forces of socialism released by the war which became increasingly emphasised in the 1920s. However, it was the economic uncertainties of the 1920s, in particular the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, which ultimately defeated soldier settlement, assisted migration and overseas settlement.

Unquestionably, as a policy, soldier settlement was an outright failure. From an imperial standpoint, the attempt to create a landed yeomanry was a spectacular disaster. Officially, Australia established between one and two thousand ex-Imperials on the land, Canada less than 300, and South Africa and New Zealand none. Even with the inclusion of perhaps several hundred ex-officers settled by private initiative in South Africa, a liberal estimate would put the total number of landed ex-Imperials in the self-governing Dominions at no more than 3,000. Considering that Britain demobilised four million men after World War I, of which 750,000 expressed an initial interest in agriculture, the enormous gulf between official estimates and actual results is staggering. Of course, the picture is slightly distorted because it does not include those ex-servicemen who settled in the Crown colonies, such as Kenya and Southern Rhodesia. Similarly, it ignores those who established themselves on the land independent of government or philanthropic agencies. Therefore it is impossible to estimate the

number of independently settled ex-servicemen. Arriving as ordinary immigrants they were quickly absorbed into their new economic and social environments making them extremely difficult, if not impossible, to trace. Nevertheless, the numbers must have been minuscule because this category of soldier settler would have needed large amounts of private capital to safely ignore the variety of state assistance which was offered. Once again, so far as those who settled in the Crown colonies and mandated territories are concerned the numbers were small, maybe several hundred.<sup>2</sup>

Britain's free passage scheme for ex-service personnel provides another insight. Ultimately, it was an administrative landmark which provided the cornerstone for the expansion of assisted migration encompassed in the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, itself a 'major revolution of policy'.<sup>3</sup> Statistically, its architects regarded the free passage scheme as a tremendous success. Just over 86,000 people were assisted at approximately £28 per head at a total cost of £2,418,263 between April 1919 and March 1923. The scheme accounted for 12% of the total number of British emigrants who settled in the empire between 1919 and 1922.<sup>4</sup> For the emigrants themselves it provided the chance at a new life overseas; an opportunity that may never have existed had they had to rely upon their own means. This was particularly important for those who embarked for Australia and New Zealand. Under normal circumstances these fares would have been the highest deterring many who instead might have travelled to Canada. Fare equalisation through government subsidisation allowed for cheaper access to the Antipodes somewhat nullifying Canada's geographical advantage.

However, the final tally was a far cry from the initial estimates of over 400,000 discussed in early 1919. It is true that the shortage of shipping during the first eighteen months hampered efforts. However, it was the onset of the short, sharp post-war depression of 1920-22 which paradoxically both made and broke the scheme. It was clear that had unemployment not been such a serious problem the British government would not have supported the idea of free passage and its subsequent extension. But at the same time the Dominions were suffering from the same economic and social problems created by the post-war depression. The inability of the Dominion governments to satiate the demands from their own veterans for jobs and housing led to the growing animosity toward the ex-Imperial and the subsequent tightening of immigration regulations.

The underlying problem, however, was the rationale behind imperial soldier settlement. The emphasis on agricultural settlement in the Dominions, the creation of a landed imperial yeomanry which would strengthen imperial defence, enhance primary production and act as a protected market for British manufactured goods, ignored the profound economic and social changes which were transforming the imperial relationship. The empire 'as an organic system, harmoniously balanced between industrial metropole and agricultural periphery' was quietly dissolving as the Dominions began to develop, expand and intensify their own industrial base.<sup>5</sup> The failure of the numerous soldier settlement policies throughout the empire had as much to do with the incorrect presuppositions in Britain and the Dominions about the economic relationship between them as it did with over-optimistic administrators settling inexperienced settlers on marginal land at a time of depressed prices for primary produce.

Economic factors aside, the failure to establish a landed imperial yeomanry was in part attributable to the growth of a 'sturdy' Dominion nationalism. E. T. Crutchley, Bankes Amery's successor as Britain's migration representative in Australia, reported in 1932 that the growth of Dominion nationalism in the 1920s, which was strengthened by the equality of status conferred by the Imperial Conference of 1926 and confirmed in the Statute of Westminster in 1931, revealed 'a manifest determination to view questions of population and migration from the national point of view only'.<sup>6</sup> No longer would the needs of the mother country dictate migration policy unless it coincided with circumstances or conditions in the Dominions which favoured a large incursion of British subjects.

This signal, which was being sounded in the late 1920s, was heard loud and clear by British policy makers during the severe depression of 1929-33. Similarly, it emerged that these same policy makers were becoming increasingly sensitive to the Dominions' viewpoint regarding British immigration and overseas settlement. Previously, the Dominions had bitterly complained that they were being used as the dumping ground for Britain's impoverished and industrial unemployed; that the British government was transferring its domestic responsibilities and difficulties to their shoulders. As the economic uncertainties of the 1920s and early 1930s intensified, the Dominions felt justified in imposing tighter entry regulations which restricted access to those immigrants who contributed immediately to industries which suffered from

a shortage of experienced manpower. The policy of 'passing all immigrants through a fine sieve' was also designed to allay the fears of Dominion labour which staunchly believed that British immigrants competed for jobs, lowered wages and increased unemployment. In July 1928, Amery explained to Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative Prime Minister, that there was a 'considerable divergence between the national situation and outlook in Great Britain and in the Dominions in connection with oversea settlement. We cannot hope to bridge that gulf except by a policy of conciliation and forbearance'.<sup>7</sup>

The depression of 1929-33 effectively ended assisted migration to the Dominions. However, it failed to stifle the debate on the pros and cons of imperial migration. Throughout the 1930s and well into World War II, the political issues which imperial migration raised, particularly vis-à-vis the Dominions, remained in the foreground of British policy making and forced a re-examination of the entire issue. For example, British officials concluded that public opinion would be more exacting in future and it was vital to ensure a continuity of policy in this respect. 'On the other hand, the support of a Dominion Government for migration into that Dominion is contingent upon public opinion there and this is influenced very largely by current economic issues'.<sup>8</sup> Therefore a realistic economic appraisal was needed well before the incubation of a new migration scheme; something that was never done during the 1920s.<sup>9</sup>

It was also recognised that migration should not be used simply as a bargaining tool in Anglo-Dominion relations or be solely directed to the complementary issues of how to increase Dominion productivity, expand markets for Dominion produce and safeguard markets for British manufacturing. Imperial migration was a joint venture which required active support and encouragement on both sides. Cooperation not confrontation was the new watchword. Conversely, the Dominions could not have it all their own way. British officials argued that in future assisted settlement schemes the Dominions would have to be prepared to contribute on an equal share financially. More importantly, the onus was on the Dominions to provide better settler support and aftercare.<sup>10</sup>

What of the various Dominion soldier settlement policies? The answer depends upon the Dominion but nevertheless their schemes were a resounding and collective failure. Just over one million Dominion men and women enlisted during World War I. Of this total, approximately

80,000 or 7.6% embarked upon agriculture under the auspices of their respective soldier settlement schemes. By 1930 less than half were still in possession of their homesteads and of these many were barely holding their own. Combined with the number of British veterans who were settled in Britain the final total of landed ex-servicemen barely reached 100,000.

The depression of 1920-22 was a critical factor in the failure of many soldier settlers. Depressed prices for primary produce made it extremely difficult for many of these new producers to make a return on their investment. However, the depression cannot be blamed for the policy's failure. Many settlers were already experiencing problems during the post-war boom. It was post-war inflation rather than the depression which laid the foundation for the settlers' future difficulties. Over-inflated prices for land, livestock and equipment forced many settlers to invest all of their capital and any immediate returns they may have accrued from the first harvest. Because many were carrying a 100% debt load, a sharp drop in prices for primary products demonstrated their extreme vulnerability.

Why did the Dominions embrace the idea of soldier settlement so willingly, when, with decades of settlement experience, they knew that soldiers made poor settlers? The patriotic hysteria created by the war and the subsequent public pressure for a policy was one factor. The soldiers deserved a reward for the hardships and sacrifices they had endured defending 'King, Country and Empire'. Most politicians were certainly not going to be foolhardy and oppose such a noble cause if they wanted to stay in office after the war. Similarly, patriotism dulled the memory of many civil servants and policy makers who had previously opposed or had remained sceptical about the usefulness of soldier farmers before the war. Besides, the war had presented social planners and politicians alike with an opportunity to start afresh and build a new society. Maybe, just maybe, the soldier farmer could redeem himself if given the proper supervision and state assistance.

But this was precisely the complaint lodged by many Canadian soldiers; that they did not receive the proper supervision or support which was promised. Although Canada possessed the most centralised soldier settlement administration and had a federal government which was prepared to take the initiative in policy formulation, many settlers harboured an acute dislike for the early activities of the SSB. It was charged as being over-bearing, inflexible, coercive and bureaucratically



sluggish. Moreover, supervision had become 'subservient to the collection of dues...which was scarcely assisted by the knowledge that the Board had powers of seizure and sale far exceeding those of normal business practice'.<sup>11</sup> The federal government's claim that it would conduct soldier settlement along normal business principles was misleading and therefore incorrect. At the same time, as long as wheat remained the primary cash crop soldiers were not going to heed the government's advice that farm diversification was the safer course of action. When the bottom fell out of the grain markets in September 1920 it was too late for many settlers to shift operations. Heavily indebted, it proved impossible for the majority of Canada's surviving soldier settlers to change to mixed farming. Those that did found the going very difficult. Even if a degree of success was obtained the prices for their produce were equally poor.

Contrasted with Australia, Canada's soldier settlement strategy seemed relatively simple and straightforward. Unlike Canada, Australia did not have a national or centralised soldier settlement policy. Similarly, Australia did not have a unified national development strategy. However, Australian soldier settlers encountered the same problems with bureaucratic red-tape, post-war inflationary pressures, depressed markets and prices, and harsh climatic fluctuations. But unlike their Canadian or New Zealand counterparts, Australian veterans suffered from the vagaries of an evolving and immature federal system. The profound lack of inter-State cooperation and the harmful competition which fostered unnecessary political friction between the Commonwealth and States was certainly more significant in Australia than her sister Dominions. There was also a 'marked inequality in treatment' of the returned man. They may have fought as Australians but pre-war partisanship and regionalism resurfaced after hostilities ceased. Instead, the men were settled as Victorians, Western Australians and Tasmanians not Australians.<sup>12</sup>

Like Canada, New Zealand developed a centralised approach to soldier settlement. Meanwhile, because of regional environmental differences, there was a degree of parochialism which resembled the deeply divisive Australian example. And unlike the senior Dominion, where the central authority kept a firm administrative grip on all aspects of policy, a pivotal role was played by the eleven regional Land Boards. As one observer suggests, New Zealand's approach was a 'decentralised system under national coordination'.<sup>13</sup> New Zealand was

as generous and determined as Canada and Australia to provide the necessary assistance to its ex-servicemen. But New Zealand's policy suffered from a fundamental flaw which did not seriously handicap the efforts of her Dominion colleagues. Most of New Zealand's best farm land was privately owned which forced the government to buy land at exorbitantly inflated prices. What little Crown land was available was isolated, thickly forested, expensive to clear, and when it was subdivided the allotments were too small and subsequently uneconomical. Compounding this problem was New Zealand's utter dependence upon British markets for its primary produce. Of all the Dominions, New Zealand had the least diversified economy and was therefore the most dependent upon the mother country for capital to develop its primary resource base. As one historian remarks the Antipodean Dominions were 'bound closely to Britain by preference and necessity'.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Canada which was diversifying internationally and developing closer ties with the United States.

South Africa was a unique case because of the political sensitivity of both the immigration and land settlement issues. Its persistent refusal to participate in the free passage scheme or any empire settlement project, or give its own veterans preferential treatment, was testimony to the delicate nature of South Africa's domestic political scene. It might be argued that Dominion nationalism played a much more significant role in the defeat of the imperial dream than in any of the other Dominions. More precisely, it was Afrikaner nationalism, as represented by the poor white problem, which triumphed over British interests. Yet, in the face of such obstacles the 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association was able to make some notable achievements and contribute, however small, to the flow of British immigration to South Africa.

The pressure exerted by the RCI throughout the war and the popular enthusiasm generated by the Haggard mission in 1916 must be acknowledged for it was significant. But even popular enthusiasm had its role to play in the failure of soldier settlement. The citizens of empire expected that something would be done for their returned men. With the sudden ending of the war in November 1918, haste to implement a policy based on over-optimistic and misplaced assumptions about the soldier as the 'right type' of settler and the economic capacity of the 'new' lands were factors which contributed to failure. Even more fundamental was the mystique that land settlement offered political, social and economic

security. The 'agrarian myth' although powerful was archaic. In some ways it hindered rather than promoted development because it blinded many people to the economic realities of a new, industrial and increasingly urbanised age. Some grudgingly gave it up. For others the fog never lifted.<sup>15</sup>

Was the establishment of a yeoman class moulded from the survivors of World War I nothing more than a hollow dream? It most certainly was despite the hopes expressed by conservative elements throughout the empire that the yeoman was a viable solution to post-war economic dislocation and social unrest. In the final analysis, soldier settlement neither solved unemployment nor produced untold national wealth. Instead, it created indebtedness, hardship and disappointment. Unemployment remained a seemingly insoluble problem and ex-servicemen and their families suffered more than their share of misery. Equally, the War Office noted that the economic value of the ex-soldier was 'practically nil in many industries whilst that of his civilian confreres [had] been rising with experience'.<sup>16</sup> Even reservists who had served with the colours for seven years found that serving their country was a serious handicap from the perspective of post-service employment. Out of touch with the market place skills became rusty and outdated. Once again, the promise to provide adequate industrial and technical training had fallen through because of a lack of preparation, funding and resources. In Britain, by the late 1920s veterans comprised 80% of the unemployed between the ages of thirty and thirty-four, and 58% of the total unemployed.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, no one could have predicted the depression of 1920-22 which did so much to shatter the dreams and quash the honest endeavours of thousands of soldier settlers. The fact remains, however, that the entire policy contained inherent and fundamental structural defects - ideological, political and administrative. Those brave souls who succeeded despite the low prices, hollow promises and bureaucratic bungling did so because of their good fortune and their determination to succeed. But so far as the vast majority were concerned they had been foredoomed to failure.

## ENDNOTES

1. PRO, BT 56/30/CIA/1641, minute by Board of Trade official, 14 May 1930.
2. Although in the case of Kenya during the early 1920s the ex-service settlers presented an acute political crisis for the Imperial government. See C. J. D. Duder, 'The Settler Response to the Indian Crisis of 1923 in Kenya: Brigadier General Philip Wheatley and "Direct Action"', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, XVII, 3 (1989), pp. 349-73.
3. Drummond, p. 43.
4. Plant, pp. 74-5.
5. Kennedy, p. 417.
6. PRO, T 161/531/S 34376/02, report by Crutchley entitled, 'Migration to Australia', 1932, p. 2. For an examination of Dominion nationalism and British policy making in the inter-war period see John Darwin, 'Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy Between the Wars', Historical Journal, XXIII, 3 (1980), pp. 657-679; Max Beloff, 'Britain and Canada Between the Wars: A British View', in Peter Lyon, ed., Britain and Canada: Survey of a Changing Relationship (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1976), pp. 50-60; John B. O'Brien, 'Empire v. National Interests in Australian-British Relations During the 1930s', Historical Studies, XXII, 89 (1987), pp. 569-86; Macintyre, pp. 198-221.
7. PRO, DO 57/72/OSO 5747, Amery memorandum for Baldwin, 'Unemployment and Migration', 24 July 1928.
8. PRO, DO 131/35, Dominions Office memorandum on migration policy, 13 October 1942.
9. PRO, CO 852/505/4, memorandum by Sir Alan Pim, former Colonial Office official and African specialist, entitled 'European Settlement in the Dependent Empire', n.d. However, the summary by Lord Hailey, chairman of the Colonial Research Committee, is dated 1 October 1942.
10. Cmd. 4689, Report to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Migration Policy (1934), p. 22; Cmd. 5766, Report of the Oversea Settlement Board, May (1938), pp. 16-19 and p. 36.
11. Powell, 'Debt of Honour', p. 83.
12. Ibid., p. 84.
13. Ibid., p. 72.
14. Macintyre, p. 205.

15. Premier James Mitchell of Western Australia best represents the stubborn determination to keep the agrarian myth alive. In 1930 he wrote George Lansbury, Commissioner of Works in Ramsay MacDonald's Labour government, that Australia's decision to halt state-aided imperial migration was a regrettable one. 'To me it is unthinkable that we should much longer drift along in the aimless fashion of recent years. Australia is in trouble because of being woefully under-peopled and because too much of her energy has been devoted to the factory instead of the farm'. PRO 30/69, Ramsay MacDonald Papers, 1/340, Mitchell to Lansbury, 13 August 1930.

16. PRO, WO 32/4222/31/General 2713, 'Note on the Employment Question', 14 July 1924.

17. Ward, The War Generation, p. 30.

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