

COMMISSION SAYS KAPUSKASING WAS A SORRY BARGAIN

Unfit Men Were Placed in Soldier Settlement With No Possibility of Making Good

Toronto, March 19.—Give each settler the privilege of electing to remain in the country or leave, is the recommendation of the Commission composed of W. F. Nickle, K. C., Lieut.-Col. John I. McLaren and Prof. John I. Sharp, which investigated the affairs of the Kapuskasing soldier settlement. The report was tabled in the legislature at the adjournment of the House last night.

The report finds many of the soldiers' grievances justified, and proceeds to make recommendations. For those leaving the colony it suggests a form of compensation for work done and buildings erected. It further recommends that any one leaving the colony be given free transportation to any part of Ontario to which they desire to go. The Commission urges speedy action in closing up the organization as it exists at present.

"It would have been better, in the light of after experience if fitness of the men for pioneer work had been more seriously considered before sending them to the colony," says the report. It adds that those, after they got started and were found wanting, should not have been permitted to remain. It states that if the pulp mill had been in operation it would have relieved much of the distress of the colony. "Attention should further be directed to the necessity of the settler having from 35 to 50 acres cleared and cultivated before a living may be made from the soil," continues the report. It adds that the settler must find work not directly connected with agriculture to earn enough to provide for his family.

Some of the reasons given for the colony folk being unable to support themselves are given in the report as follows: Army life tended to weaken personal initiative; paternalism of the scheme further weakened initiative; unfamiliarity with the work of clearing land; physical and temperamental disability; disappointment with pioneer life; difficulties with the community use of horses, and 1918 and 1919 having been discouraging seasons.

"Consideration of figures shows that the province has spent a large amount of money for very small returns, and your Commission is of the opinion that the unsatisfactory conditions should have been dealt with at a much earlier date," says the report. The Commission, however, does not accept the soldiers' opinions as to the agricultural possibilities of the country. The report says: "The Commission is of opinion that little or no weight ought to be attached to the statement of the Kapuskasing soldier settler with reference to the agricultural possibilities of that district.

Their knowledge of the best methods of treating the soil and of general farming operations in such a district was entirely too light to entitle their judgment to much consideration."