

# UNABLE TO GET SUPPLIES FROM GOVERNMENT STORE

Witness at Enquiry into Conditions at **Kapuskasing** Tells of Food Scarcity and "Green" Meat—Administration Bad.

## PROBE IN THE COLONY CONDITIONS GETS OFF TO START

The commissioners appointed by the Drury Government to enquire into the conditions (administration, equipment, welfare and management) at the Soldiers' Settlement, **Kapuskasing**, opened their enquiry at the Parliament Buildings this morning. All the commissioners—W. F. Nickle (Kingston), Col. John I. McLaren (Hamilton), and Prof. J. N. Sharp (of New Liskeard)—were present. After reading the commission the chairman announced that he had informed Hon. G. H. Ferguson, late Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines, that he would be at liberty to make any statement before the commission regarding the colony should he desire to do so.

Mr. A. Grigg, Deputy Minister, presented a statement covering the history of the settlement and also laid on the table the rules and regulations of the colony.

"Why was the contract system found unsatisfactory?" asked Mr. Nickle, in reference to the changed scheme for land clearing.

"We found that after the two seasons of 1917 and 1918 that in that time not more than one or two had completed the clearing of their ten acres, and we thought that was too long," replied Mr. Grigg. "In addition to that the idea was that with the group system the men would get practical experience one with the other. It was felt that with twenty men working together more would undoubtedly be accomplished than by men working alone." Under the new scheme the Government paid settlers \$50 an acre for clearing their first ten acres, whereas under the first arrangement the Government itself cleared the first ten acres.

"Was the new scheme brought about because under the old scheme it was costing you too much?" asked the chairman.

"On the whole the old scheme was too expensive," was the reply.

### Prices High—Meat Bad.

Mrs. David Precious, a Kittigan settler, told the commission that on several occasions she was unable to procure butter, cheese, and potatoes at the Government store. She also found the store prices were one to five cents higher than Eaton's. She complained that the meat was "green" and that she sometimes received scant courtesy at the store. When a bag of flour and other goods were sometimes not delivered at her home with the weekly supply, she was told by the store manager, "The things are

sent at your risk, and if anything is missing, it is up to you."

"What I could buy from Eaton's for \$25 would have cost me \$31 at the colony store, and we would have to take the chance of the stuff being bad at the colony store," said witness. Five or six trips had to be made to the latter for cheese, onions, cocoa, and potatoes.

Witness declared that when Mr. Grigg was at the settlement and some of the settlers wanted to discuss the store with him, he said, "The store question is too rotten; we won't discuss it."

### Not Taught How to Cut.

David Precious, husband of the last witness, went to the settlement in May, 1918. He was a plumber by trade and had never previously done any bush work. He had done some farming. His principal complaint was that the Government had not taught the settlers how to cut pulpwood, according to promise. He only made \$160 for his winter's wood's work he said. Witness said he had \$1,500 when he went there and he had spent this, together with his gratuity of \$500 and a small pension in order to maintain himself and family. "I am also largely in debt to the Ontario Government but I cannot state the amount as I have been trying to get a statement of account for 12 months and cannot."

Witness created some amusement by declaring that a French trapper had tried to put the "fear of God" into the hearts of a bunch of settlers who were sent to Kittigan to select their lots by endeavoring to scare them with stories of bears and other wild animals roaming through the district. On one day witness had taken eleven dissatisfied men to the railway station.

Deputy Minister Grigg produced official records showing that Precious had drawn \$432 in wages and \$732 on contract work, in addition to an allowance of \$151 for railway fares, freight and medical attendance.

### Feed Charges High?

Precious further complained of exorbitant charges for horse feed. "No man can afford to pay \$46 or \$47 for feed which is listed in the papers at \$18 to \$22."

"What were your main difficulties?" "Lack of knowledge on my part and bad administration on the part of the authorities, together with some physical disability."

"Some succeeded, didn't they?" "The ones who succeeded there were those who had a good, steady job under the Government all the time—they were favorites."

"Without exception?" "Yes."  
"Are you going back?" "I don't think the doctor will allow me. In any case the climatic conditions are not right. The season is too short." The commission, at this point adjourned for lunch.