

SOLDIER SETTLERS

DISSATISFACTION AT BILAMBIL.

Unfair Treatment by Department Alleged.

Mr. J. Orlov, of the Bilambil Soldiers Settlement, called at the "Tweed Daily" office yesterday and, speaking on behalf of the six soldier settlers at Bilambil, made a complaint of unfair treatment by the Soldier Settlement branch.

He said that when the Minister (Mr. Wearne) visited the settlement on February 28 he agreed very readily with the settlers on certain principles of an agreement concerning repayment of money due to the Department.

One point was that the settlers were not to be asked to sign the agreement until after a start was made on the construction of the internal roads of the settlement, which had been promised for three years. Another was that the settlers were to receive direct from the agents 80 per cent of the proceeds from the sale of crops. A further point was that the draft agreement was to be rewritten in simple language, and two particular clauses deleted.

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Now, said Mr. Orlov, the settlers were being asked to sign an agreement that had not been altered or simplified in the terms of the Minister's promise; the internal roads had not been commenced, and a contract was not even signed, while the Department was demanding that the settlers allow it to handle the whole of the proceeds from the crops, instead of the 20 per cent formerly agreed on.

The settlers were informed that unless they signed the agreement as submitted no further payments of sustenance allowance or for work done would be made to them by the Department. The stoppage of these payments would mean disaster for some settlers, and consequently they had no option but to sign.

Mr. Orlov mentioned that one settler, Mr. King, had been away in hospital for 15 months, and was still away. Consequently it was impossible for him to go into the agreement and ascertain whether the amount of indebtedness which he was required to admit was correct. Until the agreement was signed, however, no more work would be done on Mr. King's block by the Department.

It was intended to bring the matter under the notice of the members for the district.

Mr. P. Hunter, the officer in charge of the Soldier Settlement branch at Murwillumbah, was away yesterday at the

willumbah, was away yesterday at the Bilambil Settlement when a "Tweed Daily" representative inquired at the office for the purpose of inviting him to make a reply to the complaints made by Mr. Orlov.