

their country. I refer in particular to those men who were forced to do their duty by the Military Service Act. Some 4,000 of these men have served in Siberia; some 20,000 or 30,000 of them have not gone any farther than England. Many thousands of men volunteered in Canada and gave excellent service, but, through no fault of their own, they were prevented from going overseas. If this is to be a national undertaking, I say that these men are entitled to consideration. Furthermore, I notice that section 2, paragraph 3, provides that the widow of any person who died on active service, and who but for his death might be a settler as now defined, etc.—Now, does that not preclude the widow of a soldier who died on duty in Canada from benefiting?

Mr. MEIGHEN: He might have been on active service in Canada.

Mr. COOPER: Previous to June 22 last year the only men serving in Canada, except C.E.F. units, were the militia.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The hon. gentleman's question has taken several phases. First of all, the board has so far confined, and will by this Act confine, the benefits to members of the Expeditionary Force who have gone out of Canada. That is the definition appearing at the top of p. 3 of the Bill—"who have gone out of Canada and are members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force on active service." It is quite true that a great many deserving men did not go out of Canada. It is also still more true that the main purpose of the Bill is land settlement. But in arriving at the main purpose of the Bill, and keeping that ever in mind, it is only right and proper that the most deserving at all events should be treated first, and, generally speaking, those that have the first and primary claim to the best treatment are those who have gone overseas. That is not always so, but it is as broad and fair a line as can be drawn. While it is true that many men were retained here because they were efficient, if you admit a man to these benefits, simply because he is a good man, then you would have to admit civilians as well, because a great many Canadians who did not go overseas are not to be blamed.

It is no reflection on them that they did not, but those who have the greatest call upon the country are those who did; consequently, that is the class to which we first bring the benefits of the Act. But if a man incurs a disability while on active

service, or if a disability which he previously had is aggravated, he becomes entitled to the benefits of the Act. Undoubtedly if a man dies after enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, he incurs disability; therefore, his widow comes under the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. COOPER: Prior to June 22 of last year, the forces in Canada were the active militia; they were not part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Mr. MEIGHEN: If her husband would not have been entitled to the benefits of the Act, she cannot take advantage of its provisions, but if her husband dies on active service, she becomes entitled to the benefits of the Act.

Mr. MAHARG: The minister has said that the most deserving shall receive the first consideration; and I think he is perfectly right in that. It seems to me that there are none more deserving than those who have been wounded and are detained in hospitals for months, or even years—men who will eventually be able to take up land and work it successfully. I have in mind the case of a boy who went overseas, was seriously wounded, and has been in hospital for some time. He is a farmer's son and understands farming thoroughly; in close proximity to his father's farm there is land which it is expected the board will soon throw open for entry. The boy has had several operations with a view to making him capable of earning a livelihood in his former occupation. Some provision should be made under which boys in that position may have land retained for them for a reasonable length of time, provided they can pass the board. As the Bill now stands, they cannot secure land until they are discharged, but by the time they are discharged this land may have been taken up by others who may be just as deserving, or may not. These boys should not be prevented from securing land which, in a great many cases, they might be able to obtain, if it was reserved for them, in close proximity to land owned by their friends or relatives. Possibly the minister will let this clause stand until he has had time to give this suggestion consideration. Another point which I should like to mention is this: The Bill gives to the widow of the soldier who has been killed overseas the right to secure this assistance. In all fairness, that assistance should be extended also to the mother of the boy who, having been her only support, has been killed overseas.