

Mr. OLIVER: I am sorry to say that that is not absolutely correct. I do not wish to enter into an argument with the minister, but that does not happen to be true. The minister has told the House that he is withdrawing from the Act, as it stands, that fixity of right which enables the homesteader to say: I began my residence on a certain day; my rights began then, and under the terms of the Act I am entitled to my patent. By taking out these words, the minister can give or he can withhold a patent just as his officials see fit, and I want to say that in the section I represent, where such a large portion of the people are homestead settlers, this is a serious matter, and when the officials of the minister take the political attitude they do in connection with elections, it makes it a very much more serious matter. I did not wish to bring these matters up, but I am anxious to secure, within the four corners of this Act, the guarantee of the rights of the settlers I represent. I am very much more anxious to get those rights defined in an Act of Parliament than I am to accept the verbal assurance of the minister that his intentions are to give the homesteaders their lands under more favourable circumstances than in the past.

Mr. ROCHE: The hon. gentleman sees sinister results, and it seems strange that in his interpretation of this Act, he sees something that is going to result so disastrously to the best interests of the homesteaders and probably of his own political party. I am not at all anxious to see any legislation passed in this Parliament that can in any way be utilized by any official to the detriment of the homesteader or even to the detriment of the hon. gentleman's political party. If it will meet his views any better, to have the matter more definite, I am willing to incorporate in the legislation itself the four explanations that I have given, and to add to subsection (b) which reads in the present Act:

To have resided thereon at least six months in each of three years from the date of entry, or the date of commencement of residence.

The other two provisions:

Or six months' residence in each of three calendar years; or homestead year and calendar year combined, or otherwise shifting the date for the commencement of the term as may be most satisfactory to the settler.

I am willing to incorporate those two provisions within the Act itself, if that meets with the wishes of hon. gentlemen.

Mr. OLIVER: I do not see where the first two provisions that the minister mentions are contained in the Act, but if he does incorporate in the Act those four provisions that he has in the explanations, that will be satisfactory. We shall then know exactly where we stand and it will not then be a matter of discretion on the part of the administration at all.

Mr. CURRIE: I am not very well versed in the homestead law, but it occurs to me that some change should be made in the law or in the regulations so as to assist those returned soldiers whom we expect to take up this land. Those men will have largely to work together as a community.

Mr. SCHAFFNER: Was the hon. gentleman here last night?

Mr. CURRIE: Yes, but this has to do with the homestead regulations as they stand. If the soldier takes up land under the Bill which was passed last night, he is given a loan. Under this Act, however, he has to conform to the regulations as they appear. The law should be relaxed so that the soldier, if he is in a soldiers' community, may not have to reside on his homestead. The soldier may be a married man and on both sides of him there may be unmarried soldiers, and there should be some method by which those men can form a community, and residence on a man's own farm should not be essential, but he should be permitted to operate his farm and have residence within say one and a half or two miles from his farm count as residence. In that way you would have the soldier settlers in communities. Under the old law the settler was compelled to live on his farm and he was not allowed to go two or three miles away to work for another farmer. Under the present conditions of labour, if a homesteader works his farm and does his duty, he should be permitted to put in residence when assisting another farmer in the neighbourhood.

I know cases of young men who have gone out to the West and taken up homesteads and who have put in their three years' residence. By the time they got their patent, they were so sick of the whole thing that they would mortgage their farms and leave the place altogether. That is why there are so many vacant farms in the West. Some provision should be inserted in the Act to prevent men, when they get their patents, from leaving the community and selling out their farms to the loan companies. I know of sections in Upper Can-