

the men who are not farmers, what assistance is to be rendered to the mechanic, and wage earner, who has served at the front, to rehabilitate and re-establish him in his profession or calling? Is any provision to be made or is there to be class legislation entirely for those who wish to take up land?

Mr. MEIGHEN: The question naturally has received some thought. This is settlement legislation. I explained, at the beginning that the Government, in addressing itself to this work, in venturing to attack it, had overstepped the usual line of the division of responsibility that had been observed up to this time when we got beyond the stage of settlement on Dominion lands. So long as we were within that end of it, we of course were doing nothing beyond what had always been recognized as the duty of the Dominion. When we get on private lands we are going beyond that; not that we are going beyond our constitutional powers, because we cannot do that, but we are assuming a responsibility that ordinarily devolves upon the provincial authority and not upon us. However we felt, under all the circumstances, that it was our duty to do it and inasmuch as the settlement of Dominion lands have been under the Department of the Interior, because those lands were administered by the Department of the Interior, soldier settlement on these lands necessarily came under that department as well. Ordinarily speaking this much more extended sphere of work that we have now launched upon is agricultural and pertains to the Department of Agriculture more properly than it does to the Department of the Interior. It would not be practicable—at least it would be very difficult—to administer Dominion land settlement under the Department of the Interior and have private agricultural lands administered by another department. But what I am trying to point out to the hon. member (Mr. Fripp) is that in so far as I, the Minister of the Interior, am concerned, I am certainly at the limit of my powers in venturing to administer such an extensive scheme of land settlement as this. If assistance is to be given to soldiers who wish to follow their avocation it would not come under me. It would be a general question which would be taken up by the Government as a whole and the inquiry should be addressed to the Government as a whole rather than to myself as administering that phase of the work. But in the consideration of the question the House should keep

[Mr. Fripp.]

in mind that in taking care of land settlement in general on private lands, as well as on federal lands, we are already carrying the Dominion responsibility to a very great length indeed. Of course, the policy of the Government as regards housing, has special application to returned men and that is the policy of assistance to the provinces by way of loan for that purpose. It is very difficult indeed to venture upon any scheme of assistance, particularly one administered centrally and extending over the tremendous area of the Dominion, where the security is anything else than land. Whether it will be or not, it might be better administered under local authority and local control.

Mr. McQUARRIE: Does the Government contemplate any assistance towards clearing land? In my own province, as the minister knows, a great part of the lands which would be available for settlement are covered with numerous large stumps. Of course, it is impossible to ask the returned soldier to go on land of that kind without first taking the stumps out. I was wondering if it would not be possible for the Government to make some kind of an investigation with a view to assisting in the removal of these stumps. This is a very important question and I can inform the House and the minister that it requires consideration if we are to make a success of land settlement in British Columbia.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The hon. gentleman must remember that this is a settlement scheme, not a clearing or improvement enterprise. Consequently, it is a basic principle that before the Soldier Settlement Board takes hold of land it must be fit for settlement, it must be land upon which the soldier can go and make a living. It may be that much of it will require clearing, but so long as he can make a living on the land that is cleared, or make a living in the process of clearing it, then he is encouraged, if he desires to go on it; but we do not, as a board, take hold of land of that kind and endeavour to make settlement land of it. That question came up in connection with the handling of provincial crown lands, the great bulk of which are of the type described by the hon. gentleman—not necessarily stump land, but something a lot harder, and very often land that would cost more, or as much, to clear than the soldier could afford to pay for it if he intended to meet his interest, discharge his obligation, and make provision for himself and family. So we came to this general