

all selected, their experience inquired into, and all their qualifications ascertained. When that is done we find a much less percentage of loss—indeed, very little, if any, prospect of loss—among those so settled. Consequently this Bill, which aims at still further protecting the soldier against imposition than the various methods I have outlined would do; which aims at the extension of our work beyond even the successes that have been so far achieved; which aims, in a word, at making this one of the greatest settlement schemes in the world, I commend to the committee. This Bill, having those great objects in view, I commend to the best consideration of the committee and of Parliament.

Mr. PEDLOW: Will this Bill be applicable to returned nursing sisters who have served overseas with the military forces?

Mr. MEIGHEN: No. The purpose of the Bill is settlement and the only women who come within its provisions are widows of fallen soldiers. They are included because it was felt, first, that they had a special claim, and secondly, because very frequently widows of soldiers have boys growing up who can render material assistance and make the proposition one of actual settlement. The ordinary nurse, I am afraid, could not come within that promising class, and I do not think that returned nurses should, in their own interests, be encouraged to make settlement on land their occupation in life.

Mr. PEDLOW: But suppose a nursing sister gets married and wishes to settle on land. Would she not be qualified?

Mr. MEIGHEN: No. We are not helping men who marry nurses. We are helping returned soldiers.

Mr. PEDLOW: "Settler" is defined as a person who at any time during the war "has been therein engaged on active service in a military force." Does not that definition include nursing sisters?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Perhaps under a strict legal interpretation it might. But as a matter of right, the soldier is not entitled to anything. It is all in the discretion of the board, and the policy of the board is definitely not to include women.

Mr. PEDLOW: I ask the question because I have already had an application from a nursing sister who is desirous to have a homestead, and that matter, I un-

[Mr. Meighen.]

derstand, is under the consideration of the department at present.

Mr. MEIGHEN: No. I do not propose to include women.

Mr. LEMIEUX: In view of returns made by commanding officers, has the minister any idea of the average number of soldiers who intend settling on land?

Mr. MEIGHEN: As I said this morning, the number of applications is 17,450, up to the 14th of June. In this connection, it must be remembered that the Act has really been in operation only since about March. The chairman of the board is very loath to give anything in the way of an estimate, but if he were compelled to give one he would say that the prospects are that under the Bill we shall settle between 30,000 and 50,000 Canadian soldiers.

Mr. CAHILL: Is there a maximum price for land, and is the soldier permitted to buy improved land where he may find it at a proper price?

Mr. MEIGHEN: He is permitted to buy improved land but no maximum price has been fixed, because, for example, in British Columbia, the proper method of farming in certain districts might be to own five or ten acres of improved property which might be all he could afford to venture upon with the assistance the board provides, and it might be at a considerable figure per acre. So that no object could be served in fixing a maximum per acre.

Mr. CAHILL: Suppose a soldier gets a quarter-section in Saskatchewan. He borrows money at five per cent and secures equipment. In the event of his desiring to dispose of his rights, what will be his position?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Under the Order in Council he cannot sell without the consent of the board and this condition will continue if this Bill passes. I may say that a similar provision obtains in Australia, and it is manifestly necessary. We cannot permit a man to come in under the Bill and immediately sell to some one else who may at once desert the land. We have the supervision of each settlement, and the purpose of the board is to make the settler and not somebody else a success as a farmer.

Mr. CAHILL: What will the board do if one returned soldier is willing to assume another soldier's obligations?