

which these duties are completed. I consider that the minister is making a great mistake in making the changes which he proposes in the particulars I have mentioned.

Mr. ROCHE: The hon. gentlemen takes it for granted that we are abandoning the two methods in use under the old Act. We are not doing that at all; we are simply adding another option to the terms of residence. Because of cases that have been brought to the attention of the officials of the department in which grave hardships would have been imposed on settlers had the rule been strictly followed of counting the time of residence from the date of entry or the date of the commencement of residence either before or after entry, and in which cases there has been some elasticity in the application of the rule, this amendment has been proposed. We are not foregoing anything, but simply restoring, in addition to the existing options, the condition that existed before the legislation of 1908.

Mr. OLIVER: The minister has a majority and can force the Bill through, and I do not wish to delay its passage. But I point out to him that it was under the provisions of the Act of 1908 that the largest settlement in our history occurred in the Prairie West, and that there was the greatest satisfaction in the relations between the homesteaders and the department. Had there not been such satisfaction there would not have been such extensive settlement. I am not going to ascribe a sinister motive to the minister or to the Administration, but I am going to assert that only sinister results can follow from a condition in which the point of commencement of the rights of the homesteader is left in doubt or in question.

Mr. ROCHE: There is no doubt. Why did not those sinister motives exist prior to 1908 when there was similar legislation?

Mr. OLIVER: I do not wish to rake up past memories, but the provision of 1908 was adopted because, under the Administration that my hon. friend proposes to revert to, there was dissatisfaction, which had been a deterrent to settlement, and I point out that it was under the changes in the Act of 1908 that the great progress in western settlement was made, showing beyond question that the Act had not been made less adaptable to the conditions, but if anything more adaptable. I am not assuming sinister motives, but pointing out the certainty of sinister results; that when the

[Mr. Oliver.]

homesteader goes to the land office and asks for his patent and he does not know when his rights begin, they will begin when the Administration say they ought to begin.

Mr. ROCHE: Oh no, they will be published in regulations and sent broadcast.

Mr. OLIVER: This is the Act, this is not a regulation, and the Act provides that the settling of points in reference to men's rights shall depend on the judgment of the department.

Mr. ROCHE: No.

Mr. OLIVER: I shall have to disagree with the minister; that is what the Act says and provides. That is an unfortunate provision and is bound to lead to dissatisfaction and complaint on the part of settlers who have been treated differently from their neighbours, and who will ascribe such varying treatment to sinister motives, where they consider they have had the worst of the deal. I suggest that the minister leave subsection (b) of section 16, where it is today. It will not interfere with the exercise of reasonable discretion in the relaxation of conditions when the patent has to be issued. I say it is bad administration not to make specific provision in the Act so that every man will know exactly when his rights begin.

Mr. ROCHE: To show that there is no sinister motive behind this, I will take the hon. gentleman at his word and place the responsibility on his shoulders for any lack of elasticity in the future. My suggestion of this legislation was in order to make it easy for the homesteader, and to give the department a little more elasticity. At present they have the option of counting residence from the date of entry or from the date of commencement of residence either before or after entry, and my suggestion was simply to add two other provisions. They would be under the same conditions as the other two, only there would be two more options. But the hon. gentleman thinks there is something sinister behind this, and I am agreeable to leave the section as it is.

Mr. OLIVER: I expressly said I did not suggest sinister motives, but I did suggest sinister results.

Mr. TURRIFF: The people I represent are not now much interested in the working of the Homestead Act as practically all patents have been issued for homesteads in my constituency. But I should not like to see the minister drop this amendment.