

Mr. LEVI THOMSON: Is there a distinction between the widows and orphans of returned soldiers and other widows and orphans?

Mr. CURRIE: My hon. friend is making a mistake in referring to the widows and orphans of returned soldiers. There is no discussion except as to the widows of soldiers who are killed at the front. There is a great deal of force in what has been urged by the hon. member from Strathcona (Mr. Douglas), so that title should issue direct to the widow. Take the case of a widow whose husband has had a farm, and the settlement duties are not completed; she has to get letters of administration before she can obtain title to that property, or before she can have it arranged so that she and the children may acquire the property. In order to get letters of administration somebody must go security for her, or she must go to a trust company and pay a large sum of money out of her estate to get them to put up the necessary security. Of course this is very fine, and makes a lot of work for lawyers—and I like to see them get as much work as possible, because some of them need it—but the property should go to the widow of the soldier without any charge whatever; then she will have an immediate security on which she can raise funds to educate her children.

The wives of deceased soldiers are entitled to every consideration. There will not be very many cases that will come under this law because every soldier at the front carries his will in his passbook and if his body is found the will will also be found. Arrangements are made for copies of these wills being sent to an officer at headquarters. There are very few cases in which soldiers do not make their wills, but in case there is no will in the passbook, or if no passbook is available, I think it would be only proper that the state should give the property direct to the widow and avoid having the widow chasing around to get a lawyer or paying a trust company five per cent to look after the estate. I quite appreciate the remarks of the hon. member for Strathcona (Mr. Douglas). I believe that the wives of soldiers who are at home would very much appreciate it if a concession were made in that regard. I do not think anybody would be hurt by such a change in the law.

Mr. LEVI THOMSON. In case, there are children, they would be cut off entirely.

Mr. CURRIE: They could homestead when they grew up.

Mr. LEVI THOMSON: Supposing there were young children they would be cut off. The widow might marry and the children would get nothing.

Mr. CURRIE: My hon. friend is accustomed to police court cases where mothers abandon their children, but the mothers of Canada and the wives of soldiers are not built that way. They will attend to their children.

Mr. DOUGLAS: A case I have in mind is one of a mother with two or three small children. The husband was killed at the front. He had a homestead. I wrote to the department to know what disposition would be made of the land and they said that the homestead would go to the heirs of the husband on letters of administration or of probate being taken out. This woman was depending on the farm for her livelihood. Her husband was cut off without any notice and there was no accumulation of savings. The cases of a civilian's wife and soldier's wife are not parallel. I think my hon. friend from Qu'Appelle has not fully considered the matter when he says that soldiers and civilians' wives should be treated the same way in connection with a patent for a homestead. This man to whom I have referred went out to do what he considered his duty to the country. It is to be supposed that if he had remained at home he would not have been killed. The widow is left with two or three small children and under the letters of administration she has to retain that land until these children become of legal age. In the meantime it is a source of expense instead of revenue, whereas, if the patent were issued to herself, she could dispose of the land and use the proceeds for the education of her children and the maintenance of herself until her children were able to take care of her. As the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. Currie) says, the cases will be very few and everything should be done to assist the dependents of those who have given their lives for the cause of the country.

Mr. ROCHE: This amendment was introduced at the request of some of the estates of deceased soldiers. There are two alternatives—continuing the usual practice of issuing patents to persons who have taken out letters of administration or issuing them as proposed in this legislation in the name of the deceased homesteader leaving the disposition of the estate to be provided for under provincial law. I am afraid that if we were to issue a patent in the