

Mr. P. R. McGIBBON: I suggest that the minister add a clause to the Bill to provide that nursing sisters shall, so far as the benefit to be derived from this legislation is concerned, be placed on an equal footing with the returned soldier. We are giving women the vote; they are satisfactorily filling many public positions. These nurses risked their lives overseas and no doubt saved the lives of many soldiers, and I think they should not be left out of this Bill.

Mr. MICHAEL CLARK: Would not the readiest way to do that be for the nursing sister to marry the soldier?

Mr. P. R. McGIBBON: I have no objection.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Replying to the hon. member (Mr. Maharg), I may say that, generally speaking, it would be impossible to deal with those who, by reason of disability, are not discharged, because it is not possible to tell whether, having regard to the condition they may be in after their discharge, they should be encouraged to take up farming as an occupation. Consequently, the door should not be opened widely to that class. But it is not impossible to provide that where the qualifications are favourably passed upon, such a man, though not discharged, might have the right to reservation of land in his name; and I will defer the clause with a view to considering some such provision. The hon. member also referred to the case of the mother whose sole surviving son was killed in the war. If the main object of this Bill were to help the afflicted relatives of soldiers, certainly the mother should be included; but if the mother's only support was killed I do not see how she could be a settler. Certainly she is deserving, she is in the first class of all, and if she has other sons growing up she might be in a position to benefit by this scheme. But if she is alone—and the hon. member presumes that there is nobody to help her—it is not kindness to her to ask her to become a settler; I scarcely think, therefore, that it would be well to admit that class. As to the remarks of my hon. friend (Mr. P. R. McGibbon), the argument that I have just used would apply. I am inclined to think that, speaking in a legal sense, nursing sisters are included in the provisions of the Bill. But it is not the policy of the board to extend to them the benefits of the Act, because not being widows of deceased soldiers with children growing up, these nurses, it is very strongly presumed, would be better doing something else than trying to become pioneer settlers.

[Mr. Maharg.]

Mr. MAHARG: Could not a mother whose only son had been killed at the front at least be given the benefit of the free grant mentioned in section 15?

Mr. MEIGHEN: No. The widow of the soldier is entitled to the benefits of the Act, including the free grant, first, because there is presumption of her having other help, and, secondly, and perhaps the more important reason, because under the Dominion Lands Act, widows, if they have others dependent upon them, have the right of taking out homestead entries, and in 1917 Parliament extended the soldier settlement rights to widows.

In view of these two considerations I include them here, but neither of these considerations are present in the case of the mother, and I am afraid if we extended the Act to that most deserving class of all, the mother of the fallen soldier, we would have to extend it to the sister who was dependent on the fallen brother, and to the aunt who was dependent on him. It would be very hard for us to stop if we went any distance beyond where we are now.

Mr. ARTHURS: Just a word regarding the widow of the man who died Overseas. I think this clause should be extended to include the widow of the man who has from any cause died since he served Overseas. She would not be included as the clause is now drawn.

Mr. MEIGHEN: It might be justified if he died as a result of service, but I do not think it could be justified otherwise. I will take a note, however, of that class.

Mr. ARTHURS: Apparently the intention was to make that class eligible.

Mr. McKENZIE: This is a lengthy and very important Bill, but I hope that the very full explanation we have received from the minister will help us through with it. I think it is a pity that the Government did not, once for all, decide what their policy was to be with regard to assistance and recognition of the services of the returned soldier. It is well understood that it is the intention of the Government to give some form of recognition to the services of every soldier who has been Overseas and acquitted himself with credit to his country, and is now back here expecting to engage in his former occupation or to take up some other legitimate form of employment. While I have no definite information on that point, it is the general belief that the Government intends to take cognizance of their services and reward them in some way or