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What the
Conservative
Government of
British Columbia
has done for
the Sailors
and Soldiers

INTRODUCTION

Those citizens of British Columbia, whose military duty to the Empire has called them beyond the Province's borders, would, under the ordinary Election Act, be debarred from voting. But recognizing that over 30,000 men from this thinly populated Province have given up their vocation and residence to answer the call of honour, the Government did not wish to settle the problems confronting the people of British Columbia without hearing from as many voters as possible. Accordingly, the Elections Act was amended to permit the **sailors and soldiers to vote**. The soldiers, therefore, are given the unusual opportunity of expressing their wishes on the various questions of the day through the ballot.

Not only has the Government retained for the soldiers their votes, however. An Act has been passed **preventing lawsuits against soldiers** from proceeding during the war; while mining men, lumber men, land holders and others have by special legislation been **protected from losing their holdings** during the war. Arrangements by special legislation have also been made for giving every returned soldier a **grant of land** on conditions not yet entirely drafted, but which will be specially suited to the soldiers' needs. In addition to this and other legislation in the interests of the men on military duty, the Provincial Government has appointed a **Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission**, which has been caring for the few soldiers returned so far, and is preparing to grapple with the situation which will arise when thousands of men return together at the end of the war.

Following is a summary of the principal steps taken by the Government in British Columbia in the interests of the men on naval and military duty. Wherever the word soldier is used in these Acts, a clause was inserted defining the word so as to include sailors.

What the Government of British Columbia has done for its Citizen Sailors and Soldiers?

CANNOT SUE SOLDIER

War Relief Act, 1916.—During the war no lawsuit may be brought against a British Columbian who is on active service in the naval or military forces of the Empire, or against the wife or any dependent of such sailor or soldier. In the event of an action having been begun before the passing of this Act, it is stayed as against any British Columbia sailor or soldier until the end of the war. Seizure of goods or chattels by way of execution of a judgment already obtained against a sailor or soldier or his dependents is also made illegal during the war. The Act also protects any man enlisting after it was passed by the Legislature from proceedings begun before he joined the forces.

FORECLOSURES PREVENTED

Moratorium on Land Contracts, 1915 & 1916.—Where inability to meet payments in connection with contracts relating to land is due to the war, the courts are empowered to grant such extensions of time as may seem meet. Enlisted men having obligations in respect of mortgages, agreements of sale, etc., have benefitted in large numbers from this Act, the judges usually extending the time for redemption until the end of the war when a sailor or soldier is interested in the property. In 1916 the Act was extended so that it is not now necessary to prove that the war is the cause of inability to pay. This protects recently enlisted men who were in arrears before they joined the forces. They do not now have to prove that the war was responsible for their financial difficulties. That is taken for granted.

TIMBER LICENSES EXTENDED

Forest Act Relief Act, 1915 & 1916.—Sailors or soldiers who on December 31, 1915, had special timber licenses upon which payments had fallen due since August 4, 1914, are not required to make such payments, but their interests in the licenses will be open to renewal to them within six months after the end of the war.

Hand Loggers' Licenses are made good for one year from the date of their original issuance, exclusive of such time as the holder may spend on the active naval or military service of the Empire.

MINING LEASES DO NOT LAPSE

Allied Forces Exemption Act, 1915 & 1916.—Miners serving with any of the Allied forces are protected by special act of the Legislature from the lapsing of free miners' certificates, mineral claims, placer-mining claims and placer-mining leases in which they may be interested. No claim or lease owned by a member of the Allied forces at the outbreak of war is open for location during the soldier's absence. The Act was passed in 1915 and made to cover all the time from the declaration of war to one year from the passing of the Act. In 1916 the time was extended another year, and it is the policy of the Government to **extend it from year to year** until the end of the war.

FREE GRANTS TO PRE-EMPTORS

Pre-emptors Free Grants Act, 1916.—Pre-emptors on British Columbia land who have enlisted in the **active overseas** naval or military service of the Empire, are entitled to free grants of the land in their pre-emption claims—free of all payments, fees, taxes, etc., to the date of the grant without the pre-emptors' observing the requirements of the Land Act in respect of occupation and improvements. Application must be made within a year after the war ends.

Every ex-service sailor or soldier who, within one year after the close of the war, enters into occupation of a pre-emption claim under the terms of the Land Act, and within the said year makes application for a Crown grant, will receive it free on the above terms.

To the heirs of sailors and soldiers who meet death on active service the same privilege is extended.

LAND FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

Soldiers' Homestead Act, 1916.—For all other volunteers (home guards, naval volunteers, nurses, et al.) an Act was passed reclaiming a large area of land purchased from the Crown, but not completely paid for. Out of this area every individual who gave his or her services to the Empire in any capacity, may, on application within 18 months of his or her discharge, obtain by pre-emption

such acreage as on consultation with an administration board may be found suitable to the applicant's needs. All the terms of the Land Act, except the period of residence and the payments of fees, apply to the obtaining of a Crown grant five years after the record of pre-emption. The period of residence is to be subject to regulation by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. The lands in these pre-emptions will be **exempt from all but school taxes**, and a fee of \$10 is all that has to be paid to obtain the Crown grant. For five years from the date of pre-emption the lands are to be free from seizure for debt.

Other portions of this reclaimed land, which is expected to amount to over two million acres, are to be sold to the public to raise money for making **loans to the returned soldiers** to assist them in improving their pre-emptions.

RETURNED SOLDIERS PREFERRED

Taken on Civil Service.—Returned soldiers have been given preference in Provincial civil service appointments. Wherever it is possible to give a returned soldier employment in the public service this has been done. Already several scores of men who were at the front and incapacitated from military duty, have been given work in the Government Buildings at Victoria, Vancouver and elsewhere, and this principle has been definitely adopted by the Executive Council for the future, as far as possible.

RETURNED SOLDIERS' AID COMMISSION

Appointed by Order-in-Council.—In November, 1915, by order-in-council, the Provincial Government created a Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission, which began at once to care for the returning soldiers, and to study the conditions which will be created by the discharge of thousands of sailors and soldiers at the end of the war. It was on the recommendation of this Commission that the land legislation previously mentioned was enacted, while other important recommendations of the Commission are also being carried out.

Classes in commercial work, agriculture and various kinds of industrial work have already been opened at Esquimalt for returned sailors and soldiers, special attention being given by the instructors to **teaching partially disabled men how to make a living** despite the handicap occasioned by the loss of an arm, or leg or sight.

The establishment of an employment bureau for returned soldiers is under way, and the Commission is continuing its deliberations with a view to providing further assistance, while a competent staff is carrying out the work already undertaken.

GIVES DOCTORS EQUAL CHANCE

Medical Act Amendment, 1916.—In order to give British Columbia medical practitioners serving as army surgeons the right to hold rank in the British army (which recognized only men registered in Great Britain), the Legislature of British Columbia gave the medical council power to admit to practice in this Province doctors registered in Great Britain. In return for this, the British medical council gave reciprocal privileges to British Columbia physicians and surgeons, thus putting the overseas men on a par in the army with their fellow-practitioners of the United Kingdom.

SUCCESSION DUTIES REMITTED

Succession Duty Act Amendment, 1916.—Power is given the Minister of Finance to remit, where he sees fit, to the father, mother, wife, husband, brother or sister of any man or woman who meets death on the naval or military service of the Empire, the whole or any part of the succession duties due the Crown on the deceased's estate.

TRUSTEES ARE RELEASED

Execution of Trusts (War Facilities) Act, 1916.—Persons on war service who have trustee obligations or power-of-attorney responsibilities are allowed under this Act to delegate to other fit persons their trusteeships during the time they are on war service and for one month afterwards. Responsible business men desiring to participate in the Empire's defence have been able, under this Act, to free themselves of fetters which detained them at home, while the business of estates held in trust by men at the front has been enabled to be carried on by others, thus relieving the soldiers of this extra worry.

GRANT TO MILITIA VALIDATED

Victoria Grant Validation Act, 1916.—The City of Victoria having, without legal authority, made a grant of \$7,000 in aid of the militia units training in that city, the Legislature passed a

special act ratifying the procedure. The money was spent in adding to the comfort and convenience of the camps, in which many thousands of men had to spend several months of their training period.

SOLDIERS' VOTES RETAINED

Elections Act Amendment, 1916.—Every male British subject serving in the naval or military forces of the Empire, who had resided in British Columbia six months prior to enlisting, is provided with the opportunity of voting at the forthcoming general election in the constituency within which he had resided for one month prior to enlisting. **No matter where a British Columbia soldier is stationed** on military duty, by Bill No. 86 of the Legislature of 1916, he is entitled to retain the supreme privilege of citizenship, and record his ballot in favour of the representative he wishes to have protect in Parliament the interests of the beloved Province which he is defending on the battlefield.

Recognizing that the opinion of the men who have remained at home is not the opinion of the whole Province, the Government has decided to take referenda on two great questions of the day—Prohibition of the sale of liquor, and votes for women. **On both of these questions every soldier is entitled, under the Act passed last session, to have a say as to what shall be the law in the Province for which he is offering his life.** Legal machinery is provided for the taking of the vote wherever British Columbia soldiers are located, and Sir Richard McBride, the Government's Agent-General in London, has been instructed to apply for the permission of the War Office to use it.

The Government decided that such details as registration on the voters' list, etc., should not be required of the soldiers. The Liberal representatives in the Legislature opposed the clause which permits every B.C. soldier to vote, contending that those under 21 should be barred the same as if they were at home. The Conservatives retorted that a man who was old enough to fight was old enough to vote. If a boy of 18 showed he was capable of realizing his responsibilities by voluntarily enlisting, it was only fair to recognize him as a full citizen, a member of the Government pointed out.