

which we have followed in this country that the rule of the people is sovereign; that in Canada the people must govern, as they do in other parts of the Empire. When the time came for the renewal of the mandate of this Parliament, there was a division of opinion in the country on the question whether the mandate should be renewed or whether there should be an appeal to the people. The Liberal party, with, perhaps one or two exceptions—the member for Nicolet (Mr. Larmar) was not then associated with the Liberal party, although he voted at times against the Government—associated itself with the party in power with a view to extending the life of Parliament for another year without an appeal to the people. Unfortunately, during that year, instead of trying to cement the people together, instead of trying to bring them all to greater effort with a view to winning the war, the party in power adopted certain measures which caused a division among the people.

Finally the Military Service Bill was introduced and we had a rupture of public opinion in this country. The Act now before us is the following up of the conscription Bill. The Military Service Bill, of all others, should have been submitted to the people. I am sure that if this measure had been submitted to the people and had been carried by popular vote on a referendum or plebiscite, the whole of the province of Quebec would have submitted to the law as it is submitting to the law now. The people of that province have not been consulted, but they are submitting to the law because they are a law-respecting and a law-abiding people. Unfortunately, Canadians have divided on this Military Service Bill; not because they object to service which they are called upon to perform; not because they object to service which the Empire requires of them, but because the conditions and the notions of parliamentary government have been departed from. Canadians have looked upon the Government of this country as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Many a time in the old days I heard Sir John A. Macdonald and other leading men of the Conservative party proclaim, especially after 1878 when Sir John A. Macdonald scored his greatest victory, that the Canadian Government was essentially a government of the people, by the people, for the people and with the people. If any appeal had been made to the people a year ago or in 1915, the difficulties that we now face would have been avoided.

[Mr. Marcell.]

Either the Government or the Opposition of that day would have secured a mandate from the people, and having a mandate they could have carried out the people's will. Unfortunately, this was not done, and the Military Service Act is soon to be enforced. The attitude of the province of Quebec has attracted some attention, but I know the province will submit to the law until such time as it has been able to bring about its repeal, backed up by the public opinion of Canada generally.

This War-Time Elections Act, unfortunately, is not a war measure in the sense of the other "war measures" which I and other hon. members of this party have had the honour of supporting. It is more a political measure than anything else. It is introduced, as has already been said by those who have spoken from this side of the House, as a means of keeping the present Government in power. I make but few objections to the general regulations, because when I object to the principle, I do not care to discuss the details.

Regarding the enfranchisement of female relatives of soldiers, there is a large English-speaking element in my constituency, several hundred of whom have enlisted and gone to the other side. Since the war broke out the women of my county have had the honour of doing everything they could in the way of assisting, not only the Canadian boys, but the French and Belgian soldiers as well. They have formed patriotic associations, and have helped the Red Cross and have continually been sending comforts to the soldiers. These women are being disfranchised in large numbers by this Bill, because the majority of them, unfortunately, have no relatives at the front. I do not object to the granting of the franchise to the women relatives of soldiers who are at the front, because from what I have heard in my constituency I am satisfied that the majority of these women will vote like the men in that constituency will vote. On the political ground I have no objection to take, but I am sorry that an injustice is being done to the hundreds of women who have worked so devotedly and unselfishly for the soldiers since the war began, and who will be disfranchised by this Bill. I would draw the attention of the Secretary of State more particularly to the fact that this measure does a grave injustice to French and Belgian women in this country. In the city of Montreal, and the province of Quebec generally, thousands of young French and Belgian reservists enlisted and went to the front at the very outbreak of the war.