

lation of this character. The reason I rose a moment ago to ask the hon. the Prime Minister the questions I put was not, as I think he inferred, because I wanted to criticize his position on the matter at all, but rather to clear from my own mind, if possible, the fear that had been lodged there that if this legislation is passed it will not be practicable or effective because of the very fact that we are offering to the provinces a finished product, shall I say, without consultation with them in advance.

I was under the impression, and I still am of that opinion, that this legislation would be more effective, more apt to be applied in a practical manner, if the provinces were consulted beforehand and brought into accord with the objects this parliament has in mind.

As to the suggestions made by the hon. member for West Calgary (Mr. Bennett) a moment ago, I must say that there was much in his remarks that impressed me very strongly. However, so far as I am concerned I want to declare my position, and it is simply this: If the government offers to parliament this legislation and takes the stand that we must either accept this legislation or none at all I shall find myself forced to vote for it.

I hope that when the bill comes down we may have some more light on the subject. I trust that we shall have in the bill, as no doubt we will, a little more clearly set forth the manner in which the legislation will be applied, and I would hope also that parliament might consider some of the clauses which I shall not take time to go into to-night, and perhaps amend or change some of them so as to make this measure to my mind more practical and more effective. But I wanted to say this, that I stand with many, many others in this House wholly in favour of the very best effort possible being made to solve this problem of old age pensions, and to assure the government and parliament that the last thing in my mind was to offer obstacles in the way of a solution of the problem. But again I say to the Prime Minister that I do believe the much wiser course would have been to have had a conference with the provinces and come to parliament with a bill which the provinces could have assured us was acceptable to them, or with some assurance that it was a measure a number of the provinces might be willing to accept. For instance, Mr. Speaker, if this measure should be unsuitable to two or three of the major provinces, or only one or two provinces accepted it, that would be a most unhappy outcome. What

we want, if possible, is to get a measure which will be applicable throughout the whole country, suitable and acceptable to all the provinces. That is the point I wish to emphasize; that is the danger I see at the moment.

Sir EUGENE Fiset (Rimouski): I had no intention whatever of taking any further part in this discussion, in view of the statement I made this afternoon in French that I was thoroughly in accord with the principle of this resolution. But as a military officer, in view of the kind references that have been made to me by the hon. member for Frontenac-Addington (Mr. Edwards) I feel that I should make a further statement to the House.

Sir, I would have had no objection whatever to the statements the hon. member made to-night if those statements simply referred to myself. But the hon. gentleman has taken it upon himself—and I am not surprised at it, coming from him—to make the statements he did at a time when two prominent men in this House, the hon. member for East Hamilton (Mr. Mewburn) and the hon. member for South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie) two former ministers under whom I served, were absent, from the chamber. Had these hon. gentlemen been present they could have furnished to the House a thorough explanation of the reasons why I was compelled to take my pension in 1922, and their explanation would have given a different aspect to the matter from that which the hon. member for Frontenac-Addington placed upon it.

The statement the hon. member has made that I am drawing a pension at the present time as an officer of the permanent force serving at headquarters is not absolutely correct. Bearing in mind the despatches that were read in the old House of Commons after the battle of Paardeberg, and remembering the decorations I received for my services in South Africa, I can easily say that I am not ashamed of my services at that time. I was quite willing to perform the same services in 1914, but I was refused the necessary permission, notwithstanding the fact that I offered to resign my rank and serve as a Lieutenant-Colonel in the ambulance corps. I was one of the first to volunteer for service overseas, but I was told by the minister at the head of the department at the time, and also by the then Prime Minister of this country, that my place was here and that my duty lay in Canada.

Mr. EDWARDS (Frontenac): Did I question that?

Sir EUGENE Fiset: You did.