

So much by way of a return to a representative assembly in so far as the letter of the franchise is concerned. There remains to consider its use and manner of its application as respects the actual representation of constituencies in this House of Commons.

Here, again, I regret to be obliged to direct the attention of the House to a certain indifference on the part of the Government to parliamentary representation. Since the present Parliament was elected, in December 1917, vacancies have occurred in the House of Commons in thirteen constituencies. While the War was on, its existence was made the pretext for permitting constituencies, where vacancies existed, to remain unrepresented. Strange as it may seem, the Government of Canada found it necessary to avoid by-elections during the period of the War, though the Government of Great Britain found it possible, and thought it necessary and desirable, to keep intact the representative character of its parliament throughout the War.

However, with the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, the ground for this pretext was removed. One would have supposed that, in view of the long delay in affording representation, the Government would have hastened to fill existing vacancies once the War was over. But such was not the case. One pretext was made to give way to another.