

to himself not only the authority of the Minister of Militia and Defence but of the Commander in Chief of the Forces as well, that this difficulty has arisen. It does not require a soldier to be Minister of Militia. It requires a business administrator such as we now have, while the duty of mobilizing and training the forces, of determining their fitness, of determining whether or not they should go overseas and become part of the fighting units, is a duty which should be delegated to men who by experience, training and fitness are qualified to discharge it. To assist in the training of our troops men have been sent from overseas; men who have had experience in trench warfare, men who have fought at Ypres and Vimy Ridge. These men are now training our forces under the direction of a man who went to the War Office to take charge of certain work there at the time when Lord Kitchener went to South Africa. This gentleman, although he was asked to take a position in the War Office, yielded to the earnest solicitations of the Government of Canada, who recognized that he was qualified by experience and training to take charge of the mobilization and training of our forces.

Now, as to the general character of the Bill providing for the appointment of a minister overseas, I have only a word to say. General Sir Sam Hughes sent General Carson over there to represent him and you know what an anomalous position General Carson was in—he who was not a member of this House, or a member of Parliament—went over there representing the Government and putting upon his letter paper the statement that he was “representing the Minister of Militia and Defence.” It was necessary that some one representing the Government, Parliament, and people of the country should be resident minister overseas.

With regard to the Bill, I quite agree with what has been said with reference to the emoluments of the office, whatever they are as fixed by Parliament, being paid to the person discharging the duties. It is but fitting that those who have every qualification except wealth, those who have merit and ability, should have an opportunity of filling the most exalted office in the land. Were it not so the men who have taken a great and commanding position in the public life of England in the last five years would not have found an opportunity of giving the country the benefit of their services. I am quite in accord with what has been said with respect to this matter.

[Mr R. B. Bennett.]

But it does seem to me that the hon. member for Rouville (Mr. Lemieux) is right with regard to the obligations of these gentlemen to submit themselves to election. There is no necessity to submit men to by-elections having regard to the fact that the life of this Parliament expires in eight weeks from last Saturday night. Under these circumstances surely these gentlemen can go on discharging their duties without having to submit to a by-election. All the members of this Parliament who desire to be candidates will have to submit themselves to the verdict of the people within a very reasonable time.

Mr. GRAHAM: You could not tell us the date, could you?

Mr. R. B. BENNETT: I could not, but I am quite sure it will be too soon for my hon. friend.

Mr. GRAHAM: Not at all; do not worry about that.

Mr. R. B. BENNETT: The suggestion made by my hon. friend from Rouville is one that is worthy of consideration, and it does not in any sense depart from that old principle which, while it has been honoured in the breach once or twice recently in England, is now being honoured in the observance, in respect to the recent election of ministers, because in one or two instances there have been by-elections there.

Mr. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of privilege for the purpose of making a personal explanation. I desire to say that the statement, or the innuendo, that anything I said this afternoon was the result of any conspiracy or previous understanding between myself and the ex-Minister of Militia and Defence (Sir Sam Hughes) is absolutely untrue.

I did not know that the British Government had objected to General Gwatkin being appointed in Canada until the ex-minister made the statement this afternoon. The hon. member for Calgary (Mr. R. B. Bennett) is in the habit of retailing conversations with imaginary people, usually very important people.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. R. B. BENNETT: I rise—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member for Pictou (Mr. Macdonald) is quite in order in making a personal explanation, but not in enlarging upon the subject.

Mr. PROULX: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member for Prescott—