

Mr. SPEAKER: The minister has the right to reply now, and should he do so that will close the debate.

Mr. DOHERTY: In regard to the statement by the hon. gentleman from Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) in which he was pleased to refer to certain motives on the part of those who are promoting this Bill, I do not hesitate to say that the hon. gentleman is entirely mistaken in his imputation. There is no desire to do anything, except, so far as may be found possible, to meet the very principles which he himself has laid down. If I did not think it necessary to elaborate those principles, it was because, upon the principles that ought to underlie this measure, there should be substantial agreement. On those principles I am not in disagreement with my hon. friend. The provisions meet what is required, viz.: that questions which arise are whether those the soldier,—I am speaking generally—should record his vote, and that proper safeguards should surround the taking of the vote. We are not blind to the fact that,

even under this measure, it will
4 p.m. be exceedingly difficult to get a complete vote of the soldiers, but I do not think it is wise, simply because of the difficulty, that we should not make the best effort possible to achieve the end desired. As to the particular instance the hon. gentleman has mentioned: whether a soldier not a Canadian, who has been merely transferred to the Canadian Expeditionary Force, should have a vote as a Canadian soldier, I shall be open to consider suggestions in committee. We shall welcome suggestions towards making the law more workable in securing the soldiers' votes as fully as possible, and surrounding the voting with all the precautions that the conditions make possible.

Mr. MACDONALD: The minister is not referring to the statement of the Prime Minister in that regard?

Mr. DOHERTY: We fully recognize, that, even after this measure is enacted, the taking of the soldiers' votes will be surrounded with very great difficulties. But by this measure we are endeavouring, so far as possible, to obviate these difficulties, which, without this legislation, in the opinion of the Prime Minister, might make the taking of the soldiers' votes impossible.

Mr. MURPHY: Is there any provision by which voters' lists will be provided, under this Bill, to the respective parties?

Mr. DOHERTY: No. We gave consideration to and tried to elaborate, a plan by

which we could get a voters' list, but it proved in our judgment to be impracticable, and I may further say that a similar endeavour was made in Australia. We consulted with those who had the administration of the Australian Act, and they suggested to us that it was only an embarrassment, and in a general sort of way, they reported that rigidity in the provisions of the Act would tend to defeat its real purpose. There is no provision for a voters' list.

Mr. MURPHY: Could a copy of the nominal roll be obtained?

Mr. DOHERTY: Perhaps we could do better with these questions in committee.

Mr. SPEAKER: This is a question of detail more properly dealt with in committee.

Motion agreed to; Bill read the second time, and the House went into committee on the Bill—Mr. Rainville in the Chair.

On clause 1—application:

Mr. MURPHY: What is the practical application of the words "but before complete demobilization"?

Mr. DOHERTY: I understand the word "demobilization" has an accepted meaning, in military parlance, so long as soldiers are still on active service in connection with the war, and are held together as soldiers in consequence of their enrolment for this war, they are mobilized, but when they have been disbanded and allowed to return to their homes, they are demobilized. The committee, I think, will understand that there necessarily will be a period, after the war ends, when our soldiers will still be in England, or France, or on their way home, or after they have reached here, before they will be demobilized. It will take some time before they can be all dealt with, according to their respective positions and discharged, and the regiments broken up.

Mr. BURNHAM: We can all appreciate the efforts made by the gentlemen responsible for this Bill to provide ample means for the taking of the soldiers' votes.

But it seems to me, and I think it will seem to many other hon. members, that considerations arise in connection with it, such, for example, as have been outlined at a certain meeting held at Joliette as reported in the Gazette of Montreal, of Monday, August 20th, 1917. The report says that a meeting of the Liberal assembly at