

for life. However, since the armistice the authorities there have undertaken a personal investigation of each case. In many of the cases they have ordered liberation; in many others they have refused it. I think about 75 per cent have been granted their freedom, while about 25 per cent have been held to be more or less slackers. Of the 152 cases in Canada, I may say that very few have so far turned out upon investigation to be really slackers. I believe a very large proportion of them are bona fide conscientious objectors. I think that the six months' penalty, which has been resolved on as a minimum, is a moderate one, and it would hardly be fair to grant a general amnesty at the present moment, as eighty who have been already released have been penalized to the extent of six months' servitude or more. However, at the end of the six-month period in these cases, our jails and penitentiaries will be quite free of these unfortunate prisoners. I do not know if my hon. friend desires to press his motion. I think my explanation may be sufficient for his purpose.

Mr. LEMIEUX: In view of the explanation of my hon. friend, I think, perhaps, my motion might be dispensed with. It is unfortunate that we did not, in the excitement attending the discussion of the Military Service Act, frame a clause which would have been consonant with the British Act—a much more liberal one than ours. At all events, the clause was inserted in the Act and the military boards had to act accordingly. I am rather pleased at the statement of my hon. friend that only 152 cases were dealt with by the military boards, because in my opinion it is conclusive evidence that there have not been, throughout this wide Dominion, any undue claims made by so-called conscientious objectors. There were no sham or fraudulent objections, and I believe that the 152 men who boldly presented themselves and sincerely expressed their objection to military service did so in absolute good faith. I think, Mr. Speaker, that in future, if the Military Service Act needs to be amended, a clause might be inserted like that in the law of Great Britain. One of the many contributions to war correspondence which I read lately mentioned the fact that the Quakers in England served in the war not as combatants, but served in the desolated regions of France and Belgium, helping to restore the cities, the villages and the hamlets. The article I read was most interesting. The writer stated that the Quakers, who have an antipathy to participation in war in any form, were ready

[Mr. Guthrie.]

to do their duty by the state in a non-combatant capacity. I therefore urge upon the Government that if any amendment is thought necessary at any time, our law should conform as nearly as possible to the British law. With the hope that my hon. friend will extend his clemency to the unfortunate conscientious objectors, I will withdraw my motion:

Motion withdrawn.

THIRD READINGS.

Bill No. 5, to authorize a further extension of time for the completion of the Saint John and Quebec Railway between Gagetown and Westfield.—Hon. Mr. Reid.

Bill No. 9, to authorize the Reclamation of Dominion Lands by Drainage.—Hon. Mr. Meighen.

Bill No. 17, respecting the Units of Electrical Measure.—Hon. A. K. Maclean.

GOOD ROADS.

AID TO PROVINCES FOR HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION.

House again in committee on a certain proposed resolution to provide for the constructing and improving of highways in Canada.—Hon. Mr. Reid—Mr. Boivin in the Chair.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Shelburne and Queens): Might I suggest to the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals (Mr. Reid) that, before this matter is finally disposed of, he should give the House some idea, if he can, of the nature of the agreement which is to be entered into with the provincial governments. I think that if there be any difficulty in regard to the matter it will arise in that respect. Provision is made that an agreement shall be entered into between the Dominion and the local governments but we have no information in detail as to what that agreement shall be. I quite understand that we cannot expect all the details, but if the hon. gentleman has made any progress in the preparation of the agreement it might be very helpful to the committee to have that information before it. It may be possible that the Dominion Government are going to have more control than they are entitled to. They are only going to provide forty per cent of the money, and it looks as if they were going to have seventy-five per cent or more of the control. It would be well if we could have some information on that point.

Generally speaking, the object is one that I very heartily approve of. We can-