

the life of the present Parliament, notwithstanding the resolution adopted by the House of Commons in favour of that course. The Government therefore had no alternative other than to make preparation for a general election, and the Franchise Act which we are now submitting to Parliament is the outcome of that conviction.

I think it is regrettable that at such a crucial time in our history the two great political parties in Canada should be facing each other in a general election. This is a time when they should stand united, both in sympathy and in action, in prosecuting this war to a successful conclusion. Under such conditions, therefore, it is natural that the franchise law of the country should reflect the public sentiment of the day with reference to the men who are fighting not only the battles of Canada but the battles of civilization, and placing themselves in a position in which many of them are sacrificing their lives for the protection and the sanctity of our homes and our country.

The Bill is well termed the War-time Elections Act. It gives special recognition to the claims of the soldier upon the legislation which we are enacting to-day. It is not necessary for me to say that military service has long been recognized. Centuries ago it was practically the only service recognized by the autocratic or despotic governments of the age; and from early days down to the present military service in time of war has been regarded as having the first claim upon the Government of the country, no matter what that Government may have been. We need not recall those early days when military service was recognized as giving the soldier the right to loot—the right to act upon the old maxim that to the victor belongs the spoils. We do not need to go very far back in history to reach the time when lands were divided amongst those who were successful in military conquest, and when all possible recognition was given to the heroic soldiers, by monarchs, governments and parliaments. Consequently, when we come down to this day, we find the same principle asserted and crystallized in much of our legislation, and it is not unfair to say, particularly in regard to elections, that those who fight for the country should be the first to receive recognition. If this principle is found to run through the Bill now before us, it is because of that peculiar sense in human nature which, no matter how we try to suppress it, finds its origin and develop-

ment in those considerations which always appeal most strongly to our sympathies.

This Bill is an amendment to the present Dominion Elections Act. That Act as it stands to-day upon the statute book, with the addition, in italics, of the provisions of the Bill now before us for consideration, has been distributed amongst honourable gentlemen.

This Bill will not be easily understood unless its scheme of construction is first explained. It consists of three sections only. The first section supplies amendments and additions to Part II of the Dominion Elections Act. The second supplies amendments and additions to Part III of that Act. The third is an application section. There is nothing permanent about it. It is a purely war-time measure. Honourable gentlemen will note that section 1 commences with the declaration that "for the period of the war" the Dominion Elections Act shall be "deemed" to be amended in certain respects, and proceeds to indicate in what respects. Each amendment or addition to or change in the Dominion Elections Act is indicated by a letter of the alphabet in brackets. In section 1 these run from a to t. In section 2 they run from a to h.

Twelve years ago, under the previous Administration, the present Part II of the Dominion Elections Act was enacted. It applied to Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Yukon Territory. The system of list-making provided thereby is one of great simplicity, and it possesses the merit that it can be very expeditiously carried out. For this reason, in view of the necessarily restricted period of time that will be available for list-making if a winter-time election is to be avoided, the system of list-making provided by that part has been adopted in the present Bill. In a general way it may be taken that the list-making provisions of Part II of the Dominion Elections Act, which formerly extended only to the provinces and territory mentioned, have been extended to all Canada. There are certain partial exceptions which will be noted at a later stage.

There was a real necessity for this War-time Elections Act, aside altogether from what is contained in it. For Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Yukon it was necessary to prepare voters' lists in any event. The present law so compels. A recent Act of the province of British Columbia, entirely apart from the fact of the inclusion of the names of female voters on the lists of that province—because, as honourable gentlemen