

2. Statement of estimate of cost to complete lines and terminals under construction, and financial provision for same.

3. Statement of contractors' and other construction accounts outstanding, 30th June, 1917.

4. Memorandum re unsold lands.

5. Estimate of amount required for betterments and rolling stock for three years.

These statements were all enclosed in a letter from the assistant to vice-president Canadian Northern Railway system. I also lay this letter upon the Table.

### THE MILITARY VOTERS' ACT, 1917.

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILL.

Hon. C. J. DOHERTY (Minister of Justice) moved for leave to introduce Bill No. 127, The Military Voters' Act, 1917. He said:

The purpose of this Bill is to make more adequate and complete provision for the taking of the votes of our soldiers during the present war than is found to exist under the present legislation for that purpose. The House will realize that, since the enactment of the legislation of 1915, conditions have very materially altered, and that what might have proved workable at that time is to-day difficult, at all events, of being so carried out as to afford full opportunity for the recording of the soldiers' votes while at the same time providing those safeguards which the conditions make possible. I have said that conditions have very materially altered. For instance, to-day in taking an overseas soldiers' vote, you are concerned with something like five or six times the number of votes that were in contemplation at the time of the passing of the legislation already on the statute book. In the second place conditions with regard to facilities and safety of communication between this country and the overseas countries have been very seriously modified. These changes in conditions make necessary very important modifications in the legislation as it exists, modifications so important that it has been thought better to remodel the Act entirely rather than to endeavour to proceed by way of amendments to particular sections. I do not think I need dwell upon those differences of conditions because they are perfectly obvious to everybody.

The Bill, apart from making changes to meet the altered conditions, makes some changes in the qualifications of the military voter. It is proposed to include all persons in the service, not only soldiers,

[Sir Thomas White.]

but those in the naval service of Canada, and those who are in the Imperial service, but who have been enrolled therein in Canada and whose position with regard to the services they are rendering is such as to enable us to deal with them as groups. For instance, the Aviation Corps is the principal one.

Sir SAM HUGHES: Why not let the Canadian who has taken service in the Imperial Army also have the vote?

Mr. DOHERTY: That matter has had very careful consideration.

Sir SAM HUGHES: There are thousands of them.

Mr. DOHERTY: It is not merely a matter of giving a vote, but one of providing the means for taking that vote. Where you are dealing with an individual who may be found somewhere in the Imperial forces, it would certainly not be easy to provide a method by which he could be sought out and dealt with here, there and elsewhere.

Sir SAM HUGHES: You might afford him an opportunity of voting.

Mr. DOHERTY: I might say, however, just at this stage, seeing that this suggestion has been made, that while I am putting this measure before the House, and while it has had very considerable thought and a very earnest endeavour has been made to provide a law that would afford opportunity for every Canadian who is serving in this war to record his vote, we—and I am speaking certainly for the Government—are quite open for any suggestion looking for the more perfect attainment of that end. If a method can be produced to work out that result, I think I can say even now that we would certainly be prepared to give every consideration to a suggested method of doing it. It is not lack of disposition to extend the vote to every Canadian who is serving, that stands in the way of every Canadian getting the vote. If there be any with regard to whom it may not be possible that they should exercise the franchise, it will be only by reason of that impossibility that they will fail to do so.

It is proposed to do away with any distinction between the soldier who is of age and the soldier who may be under 21. It is furthermore proposed to do away with any distinction of sex as regards persons engaged in the service of Canada. Nurses, for instance, will be included, even though they