

tion. I am bound to say that I cannot accept that doctrine. I think it is possible perhaps in this country to find men—and I hope they are few—who will accept bribes, men who will decide upon issues not because of their merits but because of personal, and perhaps party, considerations, but I believe that these men who are fighting for our country, who are living in constant fear of death, who are bivouacked with death itself, who realize the stupendous danger of the situation, will spurn any attempt to influence them to vote in any way which would not be in the interest of the country. These men, whether they have been previously resident or not, are our soldiers and, as long as they wear the Canadian uniform, as long as they are in the service of our country, are our citizens. If any one of these men should die it would be to this country that his dependents will look for support and that support will be gladly given. When news comes out reporting achievements of one of these men if they have brave achievements, there is no place in the world where these achievements will evoke so much pride as in Canada. That is the kind of man that this Bill proposes to give a vote to. While I am perfectly agreed that at this critical juncture in the affairs of this country the franchise should perhaps be restricted, we should hesitate long before we deny to the man who is fighting our battles the right to have a share in determining what the policy of this country shall be during this crucial war.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: The hon. member for Annapolis (Mr. Davidson) stated that this Bill does not involve the question of what Government should be in control of public affairs; nor is it important to consider which party is in power in this country. In that statement I am sure we can all agree with him. For the life of me I cannot see how it is possible for the membership of the House of Commons to divide on party lines upon a question of this kind. I regretted hearing one or two hon. gentlemen opposite rather insinuating that, because one does not agree with the principle of this Bill, therefore, he is discriminating against the Canadian soldier. That is an unfair suggestion to make, and, as far as I am concerned, I resent it altogether. Personally, I would not care if every soldier enlisted in the Canadian force was given the vote. It would matter little to me personally; personally it would

matter little to any member of this House, but we are dealing with a piece of substantive legislation which has to do with the franchise. The franchise has always been in all countries a question of citizenship. We should settle this Bill upon some principle. There is no desire on the part of any hon. member on this side of the House to do an injustice to anybody who is fighting in the Canadian forces to-day. It is rather unpleasant to make any suggestion in the way of an amendment to the Bill which gives anybody an opportunity of making any insinuation. I do so simply because I believe the principle involved in the particular section which we are discussing is unsound. The member for Annapolis justifies his position by reference to the Franchise Act of Nova Scotia wherein it is provided that ownership of real estate carries the right to the franchise on the part of any British subject. That will only carry the hon. gentleman a certain distance because in most of the provinces of Canada residence in addition to ownership of real estate is necessary to qualification to vote. So, my hon. friend does not get very far with the argument because the majority of the provinces require residence as well as real estate property qualifications. I doubt very much if England would follow our example if they were enacting legislation of this character. Take the aviation service; I am told that in the Royal Naval Air Service sixty-five per cent of the men are Canadian born. It is quite proper that we should provide a method by which they could exercise the franchise at the first election but I doubt if the British Parliament would give them the franchise simply because they constitute a large portion of that force.

I think the suggestion in the Bill is fundamentally wrong, and it is for that reason that I oppose it. It is true, as the Minister of Justice says, that there are only a few men in the whole Canadian force who will be affected by the Bill, and by that reasoning possibly we might forego our objection, as little harm would come if they were allowed to vote. But there is a principle involved.

Mr. ARTHURS: Will the hon. gentleman explain the difference between a couple of hundred non-resident voters of British nationality voting in Nova Scotia and an equal number voting of those who were born outside of Canada and who join our forces, say in England? The number is very small in each case.