

Hon. Mr. CHOQUETTE—So far, yes. I think the election should take place after the war, when the soldiers will be able to vote in their own country. If the Government is so anxious to have them vote, let them hold the election, say, three months after the war. That would enable all the soldiers to return and give time to the wounded and sick to be cured, and they could vote here.

Hon. Mr. DAVIS—And time to get the prisoners released.

Hon. Mr. CHOQUETTE—Yes—Under all these circumstances we would please the soldiers in the trenches very much more by giving them good rifles, good boots, good clothes, good binoculars and good tobacco, than by giving them a ballot. The soldiers at the front have suffered greatly for their country, and I am sure that they would be much more pleased if the Government retained the money to be spent on this Bill to buy comforts and necessities than to send ballots to them saying, "Here is a ballot, you have to vote for my friend." This Bill may have a good sentiment behind it, but in this country there are thousands of men who can not vote on election day although they are living here. Railway men are sometimes obliged to leave before election day, perhaps to carry soldiers on their way to the front. If an election takes place in June, July or August, I know that in some counties below Quebec there will be two or three hundred men who could not vote on election day. I have suffered myself from that sometimes when I was a candidate. They go away by the end of May or the beginning of June to Saguenay, Anticosti island, Gaspé or Labrador and are necessarily absent when the vote is taken. It would be ten times easier, more legal and more intelligent to give these people the right to vote, but there is nothing about them in the Bill. The idea is to make a kind of appeal to sentiment so that the people may say, "This Government is looking after the soldiers." There is no hurry for an election. Why have an election before the end of the war? The Liberal party is not afraid of an election, but will be glad to go to the country. But it seems to me the best way to insure the right of all these soldiers is to have an election at a date when they will be here, and when they will be back on their farms, and in their homes—and in a position to vote with intelligence knowing something of the issues before the people, knowing who are the candidates in the field, and especially

knowing the policies of the Government and the Opposition. I repeat, I do not speak as a Liberal, because we are not any more going to fight elections in this House, but generally speaking, from what I have seen in the papers, the Liberals are not afraid of an election, but will be glad to have it now. If you take the British Government as an example, what are they doing? If I remember correctly the law has been changed and instead of a member of Parliament being elected for seven years, he is now elected for a term of five years. According to that law I think an election should be held this year, but I see by the press that both parties are going to agree to postpone the election until after the war. It might be in the interests of the party, perhaps, but it would be contrary to the Constitution, to have an election now. If the Government are in a hurry to bring on an election it is probably because they are afraid that when the soldiers return after the war, on account of the way they have been treated, they will vote against the Government. They probably think by this measure to flatter their feelings, but the method is unconstitutional, impracticable, and absurd. The first draft of the Bill contained a clause which gave some assurance that the officers would be appointed in such a way as to give satisfaction and security to both parties. Clause 4 of the Bill as it was first printed after its introduction provided:

There shall be appointed by the Governor in Council six scrutineers, three appointed on the nomination of the Prime Minister, and three on the nomination of the Opposition.

There was some fairness in that. It would place both parties on the same footing in regard to scrutineers, but when I read the revised Bill I see that that clause has been struck out. The insertion of that clause originally in the Bill showed that the Government was willing to make some concessions to public sentiment.

Of course the ballot form here would show that the soldier will have also the right to vote for an independent candidate. It would be a question to know who are the independent candidates, but by clause 4 it would appear that the independent candidate has no scrutineer. What is the reason? Because there are so many independents now? Perhaps some of the Nationalists would come back to their old love and would like to have scrutineers too; but the Government was only proposing by that clause 4 to have so many scrutineers, and have no provision for an independent candidate.