

the provisions submitted in this measure. As I understand it, the Militia Act, chap. 41 of the Revised Statutes of Canada, gives the Government of the day—whatever Government, Liberal or Conservative, it may be—power under certain circumstances to enroll every man in Canada and power also in case of an emergency war to enroll every man between the ages of eighteen and sixty for the purpose of defending Canada in or beyond Canada. What does that mean? It means that this Government, to-day or to-morrow, if this Bill were defeated, could enroll every man from eighteen to sixty years of age and compel him to fight in this struggle for the liberty and civilization of the world. It means that if the Government of the day thought that 200,000 men were required for that struggle, it could enroll them and compel them to fight. There are other provisions in the Militia Act which, to my mind, are quite insufficient to meet the situation to-day. The Militia Act is an anachronism in the situation that confronts this country and the whole world in this great world-war. There are practically no exceptions of any material kind specified in the Militia Act. There are a few exemptions such as ministers of the Crown, deputy ministers, telegraphers, men engaged in transportation, preachers, and, I think, priests, pilots, the only son of a widowed mother who is dependent on him for her support, judges and those who from conscientious religious belief do not believe in war. But throughout the whole Act there is nothing to say that the man who may be as useful in Canada as he would be at the front, and perhaps more so, may be exempted, so that the Militia Act is not suitable for enforcement in this country under present conditions. How does the measure under discussion limit the power of the Government? Under it the Government cannot send to the front men of eighteen years of age; they can send only men twenty years old and upwards; they can not send to the front men between forty-five and sixty years of age; they can send only men up to forty-five years of age. The Government are limited under this measure to enroll 100,000 men for service abroad. In all these respects the measure is placing strong and, I think, proper limitations upon the power of this Government or of any other Government.

There are other features of the Militia Act which do not appeal to me, to which, in my judgment, the present Bill is preferable.

How would the Militia Act be enforced? What would happen is this, and I leave it

[Mr. Ross.]

to the judgment of the House whether I am correct or not. The men are divided into four classes: Unmarried men and widowers without children from 18 to 30 years of age, and the same from 30 to 40 years of age; married men from 18 to 45, and men from 45 to 60. If this Government intended to enforce the Act, and it has power to do so to-morrow, what would happen? These men would be enrolled by proclamation. Taking a township in my own county as an illustration, this is what would happen in Caradoc, a good Scotch township, loyal to the core, if the first two classes were called. The names of the men would be put in some bag or box—that has been done in the past, at any rate—and a recruiting officer or soldier appointed by the Government would pick out names from the box until the required number of men from that township was drafted. We can easily see what might happen. The man who would be most useful on the farm might be sent to fight, and the man who would be most useful at the front might be left on the farm. Other things might creep in, as they have been known to creep in in the past. When the last draft took place, I was told by the son of a man who had been drafted himself that in one township in my county, by some skilful manipulation—I do not know how it was done—every man who was drafted to fight the battles of Canada at that time was a Grit. He told me how he thought it happened. He thought there were two sections in the box, one for Liberals and one for Conservatives, and in drawing out the names the officer in charge went to the section in which all the Liberal names were put, and consequently only Liberals were chosen to fight the battles of their country. I say it is unsafe to put that power in the hands of any Government. Governments are not more honest to-day probably than they were then, and the same thing might happen to-day. I am opposed to entrusting any Government with such power as that.

Mr. L. A. LAPOINTE: You are doing worse in this Bill.

Mr. ROSS: I am not going to do worse if I can help it. I shall try and see that this Act is amended or clarified so that no injustice will be done to any man, whatever his creed, race or colour or political faith may be. I understand from what the Prime Minister said in the House that he is quite willing to listen to any suggestions along these lines.