

Mr. OLIVER: I took part in the discussion on Saturday, and I have no apology to make to the Prime Minister or to this House—

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I am not asking for any.

Mr. OLIVER: —for having taken part in a discussion of such importance to the Dominion of Canada—not as important, I will admit, as an attempt to disfranchise tens of thousands of citizens, but still a matter of very deep and far-reaching importance. I wish to add a word to what my hon. friend from Carleton, N.B., (Mr. Carvell) has said in regard to the effect of paragraph (g) of this section. Since I came to the House this evening I received a telegram in the following terms:

Winnipeg, Sept. 10, 1917.

Hon. Frank Oliver, M.P.,
Ottawa, Ont.

Sir,—The Bohemian (Czech) National Alliance in Canada strongly objects that Bohemians who are loyal Canadian citizens should be deprived of the franchise by the War-Time Elections Act. The Bohemians in Canada are heart and soul in favour of the Allies, and are anxious that Bohemia, their native country, should be enabled to throw off the hated yoke of Austria. Bohemians have joined in large numbers the different Canadian battalions, and one company composed entirely of Bohemians was organized and went overseas with the 223rd Battalion from Portage la Prairie. Bohemians are fighting in large numbers in all the armies of the Allies. We would appeal to you to see that Canadian Bohemians are honoured for their loyalty to Canada, and not deprived of their franchise by the Act. Similar request has been wired to Right Hon. Sir R. Borden on the 5th of September.

We are, Sir,

Your obedient servants,
August Fibiger, President.
Frank Dojacek, Secretary.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: Following the lines suggested by the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Carvell), I would say it would be most unjust to put this Bill through by the application of the closure. The Bill should at least have been prepared in a decent way. There can be no defence whatever for putting a Bill drafted in this way before Parliament. Surely the Prime Minister and his friends can hardly expect members of the House to grasp the purport of such a Bill quickly and easily. What is proposed to be done for us to-morrow, should have been done in the first instance. If hon. gentlemen will look at what is clause (g) of 33b on page 2, they will find two amendments in one clause, and the amended portions are so inserted that they are only recognizable because there are quotation

marks at the beginning and end of the amendments. I never saw or heard of a Bill presented to Parliament in that form. There may be nothing difficult to understand about the Bill if one had an opportunity of going through it thoroughly and carefully, but this, of course, would take some time. I think the Bill should be allowed to stand until to-morrow, when we can have at least a portion of it in the form in which it should have been presented to the House at first. We have not yet discussed the greater portion of section I, which covers ten pages. One clause of a Bill covering ten pages is confusing to most members of the House. I think we could make very substantial progress to-morrow if Part II is printed in the manner intimated by the Prime Minister. We must also remember that the officer designated as enumerator is an unknown quantity in the Maritime Provinces, and also in Quebec.

Mr. GRAHAM: And in the older districts of Ontario.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: The Bill was not even explained to us in a very complete way before being taken up by the committee. In introducing it, the Secretary of State simply discussed two or three of the main principles involved, that is, the disfranchising clauses, and the enfranchising clauses.

Mr. MEIGHEN: And the list-making clauses.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: Very little else. I would have expected that on the second reading he would explain the purport of many of the sections, as is customary. He explained the principle of the Bill on the first reading, but said nothing whatever about it on the second reading. The Bill was prepared in a way that would confuse one, and on that ground alone I trust the Government will consider the matter of postponing further consideration of it until to-morrow.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: What do you say about Friday night?

Mr. GRAHAM: I think at the present juncture it is hardly fair to ask us to say that the Bill must have a third reading on Friday night. So far as I have heard, there is no desire to retard it, and if the Government is under the impression that such a desire exists, they have a wrong notion. I do not know how they got it into their minds, but they seem to me as if they were to have a head-on collision.