

Mr. KNOWLES: There is not much principle about it.

Mr. OLIVER: I did not have the good fortune to be present when the minister made his explanation of the principle of the Bill and of the differences between this Bill and the present Act. May I be permitted to say that I think the proper time for making such a full explanation as the House is entitled to under such circumstances is upon the second reading of the Bill. However, the minister has seen fit to take the other course. The suggestion of my hon. friend from Moosejaw (Mr. Knowles) was not an objection to the form in which the Bill has been introduced. I think he would agree, as I would, that it would be very much better to introduce the Bill in this form than in the form of an amendment. But his point was, if I caught it aright, that the minister, seeing fit to introduce the Bill in this form, should make to the House the same explanation as to the differences in principle as he would necessarily have made had he introduced a Bill in amendment to the present Act. This is a long Bill, it is intricate in many respects and members will have considerable difficulty in comparing its provisions with those of the previous measure. Therefore, the House is rightly entitled to consideration at the hands of the minister. While we can deal with certain of these matters of detail in committee of the whole, we make up our minds as to the merits of the measure on the principles laid down in the discussion on the second reading. Those of us who had not the privilege of hearing the minister on the introduction of the Bill are hardly in a position to deal with the subject to-day as it should be dealt with. It is all the more impressed on my mind from the fact that repeatedly from the other side of the House, from the lips of the Prime Minister as well as, I think, other members, it has been stated that it was a practical impossibility to take the soldier's vote overseas.

That being the case, and a new measure being introduced, it is particularly in order that information should be given why if it was impossible to take the soldiers' vote under the existing measure, it will be possible to do so under the measure now introduced. This is a measure of very great and far-reaching importance. Everybody will agree that a citizen of Canada, entitled to vote in Canada, should be entitled to vote when he is serving Canada in a military capacity, although he may be outside its limits. So far as that principle is embodied

in the Bill, certainly it will have the support of myself and, I am sure, of every hon. member of this House.

But there are other principles involved in a franchise Act besides the principle of providing for the casting of the vote. There are principles connected with ensuring that the vote shall be counted as it has been cast. There is the principle of the right of the several parties who are concerned in the voting to be sure that, first, the vote is cast secretly; second, that it is cast without pressure of fear or favour; and, third, that, having been so cast, it shall be counted as it was cast. I am unable to say whether these principles are provided for in the Bill, and I would say to the minister that I do not consider them details at all; I consider each one an essential principle. If they are not provided for in the Bill, there is a possibility that, instead of the privilege of the franchise being exercised as a right and a duty, the intention of the voter may be diverted from its proper purpose, and, instead of being of assistance in expressing the mind of the people of Canada, it may be a means of misdirecting the minds of the people. I can only hope that the minister, in the preparation of the Bill, has had these points in mind. I am not able to say whether they are properly safeguarded or not, as I have not had the opportunity to discuss the Bill, and in any case would not be able to form an opinion on these points without having the minister's explanation.

There is, however, one feature that I find in section 3 in which, following the suggestion of the hon. member for Moosejaw (Mr. Knowles), I must say I cannot see an evidence of good faith on the part of the minister or the Government in the preparation of the Bill, and if this provision of which I speak is a fair sample of the Bill's provisions throughout, I would be compelled to take very strong exception to it and to say that it may have been that the fact that the Government did not have a majority in the Senate was a protection to the public interest in the passing of the other Bill; but that now that the Government has a majority in the Senate, it feels free to introduce such a measure as it pleases and as it thinks may best serve its purpose, whatever that purpose may be. The liberties and rights of the people of Canada are involved in this measure, and I can only take the provision of subsection 3 of section 3 as a deliberate and intentional and very serious and far-reaching attack upon the