

cise of the franchise. It is the first time it is done here, and it has never been done in England.

Now I desire to call the attention of the hon. gentleman as to whether this Bill and this new departure is liable to produce good or to produce evil; and in examining the question I may say that I am not biased one way or the other, or influenced by any political consideration. When Lord Kitchener was called to the position of Secretary of State for War at the outbreak of the war last August, his appointment was acclaimed all over the Empire because he was known as a great soldier and also a great administrator. He was equally qualified to exercise the office in one quality or the other. The quality of administrator does not dispel the idea that the occupant of the office should close his eyes to all political considerations; but he considered that the position of a soldier—for he intended to accept office as a soldier—closed all avenues to politics; and in taking office he announced that as a soldier he had no politics. Hon. gentlemen, those words were very significant under the circumstances. It was an expression of opinion by Lord Kitchener that as long as the war existed, as long as he occupied that office he considered that his duty was to meddle in no shape or form in politics, and he did not even intend to be responsible for the political acts or the political administration of the Cabinet of which he was to form part. Now, that was for the purpose of reassuring public opinion in England, on account of what had taken place a few months before, and it was for this purpose, I take it of giving guidance to all members of the military force. In England they are exceedingly careful and exceedingly proud of the standing and reputation of the army. They give all the consideration possible to the army and they do it as a matter of duty towards citizens who are sacrificing their lives, and they do it also for the purpose of inducing citizens to join the army and render good service.

If one goes to England he is necessarily struck by the consideration extended to the army. Monuments after monuments are erected for the purpose of expressing the devotion of the English nation for all members of the army who do honour to the nation. If we import politics into the Canadian army, or the military men who are called upon to render service in England as part of the English army, are we going to protect the interests of the army, or of the members

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of the army? I believe that there is nothing too good for the citizens, or the families of the citizens, who go to the front and risk their lives in the present war. If we let politics interfere with the army, what will be the consequence? It will, rightly or wrongly, create bias against the army. There will probably be a contention that the army has been serving one party or the other, and after the war, when the time comes to vote pensions to the members of the army or their families, then this Parliament will be divided: one side will be in favour of pensions to those who have been injured, and the other side will be against it. I draw attention to this very serious consideration; it is likely to do a very great deal of mischief.

Another consideration to which I call your attention is that the exercise of the franchise is common property and it is on account of that that it is surrounded not only in the exercise of my own franchise, but I am equally interested in the proper exercise of the franchise by my neighbour. Can we guard against the dangers which are incident upon the exercise of this franchise under these circumstances on the other side of the water? It is universally acknowledged that the oath will not be binding, that Parliament has no jurisdiction outside of the Dominion of Canada; any fraud may be committed, and there is no remedy against it. If anything of that kind were to happen, what would be the consequences? It would be a scandal, not only here, but also in England, and France, where most of our soldiers are now. Another consideration which we should not lose sight of is this: that in passing this Bill we are imposing duties on the officers of the British army. Suppose the British officers refuse to discharge those duties, what would be the consequences? It would be a rebuke to this Parliament. Should we expose ourselves to occupying a position of that kind? It seems to me we should not go outside of our jurisdiction, and I repeat that this Bill is destructive of the true military spirit. It is liable to place the army, or the person whom the Bill is intended to protect, in a very false position.

I quite realize that the subject of this Bill is a matter pertaining principally to the House of Commons, but I must say that, as a member of this hon. House, I cannot abdicate my own judgment, and I believe we are here to