

hon. gentlemen opposite an example by the very fair and non-partisan criticism which they have given the administration of our militia by the minister now in office. But we must not lose sight of the fact that an imperial officer can always return to the imperial service. It is known here that Lord Dundonald is not acting in his own interests by remaining in Canada, but is sacrificing himself for the benefit of the empire. Had he remained in active service in the old land, he would no doubt be in a much higher position relatively than the one he now occupies, and in saying this I know whereof I speak. Such an officer is certainly in a better position to stand by what he considers right than possibly could be a Canadian officer more under the control of the minister, and one who might be appointed for political purposes. The hon. minister has hinted to-day that in England these military appointments are sometimes demanded for other and less noble motives than political, but certainly an imperial officer must be in a better position to assert himself than one who has no future once he leaves the Canadian service. I maintain that an officer commanding who would be in a position semi-independent of the minister is the one who can do best service in the interests of our militia. But the most important feature of the whole matter is this. This change, coming at the present time, may be regarded by very many as a reflection upon our present very excellent general officer commanding. The public will not stop to consider that it is the outcome of the conduct of past general officers commanding in Canada, but will look upon it as due to something that occurred in the regime of the present general officer commanding. I know that the minister to-day has a better idea of his power and duties in relation to the general officer commanding than he had a few years ago, and I do not think I am divulging any secret when I say that the Minister of Militia and two-thirds of the parliamentarians of the Dominion, from the present minister down, used to be of the opinion that there was some little unwritten or mysterious power which the general officer coming from the British service had in Canada—in other words that he had a little power in himself outside of the people of Canada which he could exercise independent of the Minister of Militia; and I claim to have had a little to do in giving these people a proper conception of the functions pertaining to the general officer commanding. My good friend while the minister told us this afternoon that he was in favour of this change, he had a high opinion of the British officers. Well, I am not in favour of this change, and I have not such a wonderfully high opinion of the British officer as some people have. Nevertheless, the great point in the whole Bill is that you remove the connecting link between the Canadian militia and

the imperial army. However, there is one clause that may be a kind of saver to the minister, and that is that when the colonial forces are serving with the imperial forces the imperial appointee shall command. That, of course, will preserve the union of the two forces in the mind of the people of Canada, and to that extent will offset the evil done by this clause. I could not let the remarks of the minister this afternoon pass without pointing out that there were arguments, and very strong arguments, in favour of preserving the law in its present form, so far as this section is concerned.

Mr. A. T. THOMPSON. I doubt very much if the clause which we are now discussing was framed because of the inefficiency of previous general officers commanding the Canadian militia. To my mind, this is nothing more or less than a declaration—and a very fitting one—that there is no honour in the gift of the Canadian government too good for a Canadian, provided that Canadian, by attainments and experience, be worthy of it. Nevertheless, I sympathize deeply with a great deal of what the hon. member for North Victoria (Mr. Hughes) has just said. I would take second place to no man in wishing the continuance of the close connection between the motherland and this country. But I cannot, for the life of me, see why this should weaken the tie in the least. I believe that it would have the effect, if anything, of strengthening that tie. If there is one thing more than another that would tend to build up in Canada the feeling of independence and the desire to become a separate power, it is that we should consider ourselves inferior to the people of any other part of the British empire. We wish to speak in no braggart way; we do not wish to assume that we are superior to or better than the people of other parts of the empire. But that we are their equal, I think we may say without boasting. And as an example of that, I would give the hon. member for North Victoria, who acquitted himself with such credit in South Africa, proving himself fully the equal, I think, of the imperial officers with whom he came in contact. I do recognize the difficulty of opening the door to political intrigue. That is the strongest point, possibly, that the hon. gentleman has made. But I have confidence in the strength of this government and in the strength of the present Minister of Militia, and I believe that, for some time to come at least, the power to appoint a Canadian general officer commanding will not be exercised unless we are so happy as to have a gentleman so well qualified by experience and ability that he is, so to speak, ear-marked for this high post. We must not leave out of consideration the fact that we have in Canada an excellent educational institution in the Military College at Kingston, and that graduating from that institution, year by year, we