

My hon. friend from Three Rivers asked the Secretary of State to assure us that these men would be qualified. We have no assurance that they will be qualified. I believe the only qualification will be that these men must be friendly to the Government. That will certainly be their main qualification. I say that these officials will have too much discretion and too much latitude. They can take names off the list, as well as add names to it. On what evidence will they take names off the list? There is no provision in the Bill in regard to that. They will take the Ontario lists prepared in 1916. The Bill does not provide that they shall hear evidence, but they will use their own discretion, and take names from the list for certain reasons. If these officials are partisans, they will perhaps act unjustly. In order to secure the benefit of the vote of those men whose names are taken off the list, the voters will have to appear before a judge and testify. Their vote will only be received on a recount, after their right to vote has been established before a judge. I think the Secretary of State should have accepted some of the suggestions made on this side of the House, and should have given us an assurance that the enumerators would be fair men, and that a proper list would be prepared, for a fair list is the very basis of an election. The Government should not load the dice. The Government has secured enough advantage by the passing of the Soldiers' Votes Bill, and the provision that these votes may be distributed to any county the voters designate. The provision permitting the bunching of the votes gives them enough advantage, without giving the enumerator the right to take voters from the list. I should like to make further remarks about this Bill, but those who follow me will be able to show many deficiencies in the Bill and I certainly intend to vote for the amendment and against the motion for third reading.

Mr. W. G. WEICHEL (North Waterloo): Many measures have been introduced into this House since Canada's participation in the war commenced, but I venture to say to-night that none apart from the Military Service Bill, created a greater interest throughout the country than the present Franchise Bill. It is a pity that there is a necessity at all for introducing a measure of this kind. I don't wish to put all the blame on other men's shoulders, but I cannot view the matter in any other light than that the blame for the introduction of the present Franchise Bill must be placed on the shoulders of the present Opposition,

[Mr. Proulx.]

because, had they agreed to an extension of the life of Parliament, as the country demanded, and had we had coalition or union government, the necessity of this Bill would absolutely have been obviated. I wish to say a few words with regard to the measure in its present form, and I do not wish to follow my hon. friend from Prescott (Mr. Proulx), as my line of thought will lead me in a different direction. I am greatly in favour of the feature in this Bill which provides for the granting of female suffrage to the relatives of the soldiers at the front. I have been in different parts of Canada, and have never yet met with any man or woman who was not greatly in favour of this particular section which grants suffrage to the wives and other relatives of the soldiers at the front. The Secretary of State (Mr. Meighen), in so ably describing the measure the other day, stated that the basis of franchise was service and sacrifice. We all know what sacrifices have been made by the men who have left the soil of Canada during the last three years. We know that 30,000 of these brave men lie buried in France, and that thousands of them are to-day prisoners in the prison camps in Germany, suffering untold hardships, no doubt. We also know that others, on account of doing special military service, will not be privileged to vote during this election campaign. We must not forget that the personality of a man in his own district counts for a great deal during an election campaign; and that personality to-day, owing to the fact that these men cannot be with us, is missing, and, therefore, I think a thousand considerations are being pressed home, that these men should be protected by someone here who can speak on their behalf. And that is being provided for by the Bill. I have heard several gentlemen on the opposite side of the House state that the women of this country feel insulted, because the Bill does not provide universal franchise for all the women of Canada. I have never heard anything of the kind in this country, and I believe I have travelled as much as most men in this House. In fact, I know that the women of this country are in perfect accord with the Bill in its present form, and, to prove that, I will take the liberty of reading a despatch which appeared in this morning's Journal-Press, dated Toronto, September 13. It reads:

A letter signed by Mrs. F. H. Torrington, Mrs. Albert Gooderham, Mrs. E. Stevens, and Mrs. L. A. Hamilton, and referring to the War-Time Election Bill, has been issued: