

He made some references—such as have been made more than once in this debate by hon. gentlemen opposite who, when they get a subject that they like, do not hesitate to refer to it very frequently—he made some references to the War-time Elections Act, an Act which has resuscitated a whole lot of adjectives and seems destined to live long in the memory of many. I am not going to enter into an elaborate defence of that statute now. It was argued in this House as fully, as carefully, and as thoroughly as any legislation ever presented to Parliament. It received the assent of Parliament and it was not a party assent alone. Independent members of this House when the debate was heard, supported the principle of the measure. The hon. gentleman was put a very pertinent question by my hon. friend from Muskoka (Mr. Peter McGibbon). Did he, he was asked, favour that men lately arrived from alien enemy lands (and they and none others were disfranchised), men possibly and probably whose brothers or whose fathers were fighting against our country, should be given a vote in the election which determined the course of this country in the war? "Yes," he said, "I would give them the vote and I would make them fight." That was not the judgment of the military authorities of Great Britain or of the military authorities of Canada.

Hon. Mr. CRERAR: It was the judgment of the military authorities of the United States. They enrolled these men and the casualty lists, when they came back to the United States, contained many foreign names.

Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I am informed on authority of the highest character that the military men of the United States did not allow them in the front line. But, I would prefer to take my example, even in matters of the late war, from the British Empire, rather than from the United States. These men described by my hon. friend from Muskoka were voluntarily enlisted. Many of them enlisted—relatively, of course, few compared with the rest of the population—but many of them enlisted. When it was found that they were of the character described by my hon. friend from Muskoka, although they enlisted voluntarily, they were turned back and were refused permission to go to the front for the sake of the safety of the boys of Canada who were fighting. These were the facts and this was the situation that faced us. Were we to stand in our places here and say: "We know better than the

[Mr. Meighen.]

men who are actively commanding the forces at the front." Yet, that is what the hon. member for Marquette would have done. That surely is not sound policy. Although I do not like to use the term, it is scarcely common sense.

Mr. W. H. WHITE: Did the Government a month or so after the election was over, not conscript thousands from the class that were disfranchised?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Never in the world—not a single man.

Mr. W. H. WHITE: I am afraid the hon. gentleman is wrong.

Mr. MEIGHEN: We could not do it; the law prevented us from doing it.

Mr. W. H. WHITE: I know of hundreds of cases myself.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The hon. gentleman cannot know of cases because the statute did not provide for their conscription, nor would we have done so any way because the military authorities would have refused them.

Now, it was of course to be expected that the hon. member for Marquette should refer to the subject of the trade policy of Canada. This is not the appropriate occasion, as you, Mr. Speaker, have taken occasion to remind us, to enter into any specific controversy on that subject. At all events the more appropriate time is the debate upon the Budget. I will enter into no discussion of it at the present time, therefore, because I believe that when we take the question up at all we should do so in a thorough manner—the debate should be full and free and specifically devoted to that subject. But let me say this to the hon. gentleman (Mr. Crerar) and to those who sit around him. They regard—and they have led many others to regard—this question as a great issue between those enjoying special rights and the common people of the country. They affect to believe themselves, and undoubtedly they have led many to believe, that he who associates himself with one side of that cause, who believes that the one principle that I, at all events, affirm is the true principle for this country, necessarily is in some way a subject of high and special privilege and the enemy of the common people. Surely one reflection alone will be sufficient to disabuse that impression. The principle that the hon. gentleman attacks, right or wrong, has been more the subject of debate and has been more thoroughly reviewed on this continent than