

fight it out now. First, I think, that the Parliament of Canada has no right to pass any legislation to be enforced in a foreign country, especially in the trenches. It is not practicable to enforce such a law without the consent of the British and French Governments. I say, as a matter of principle this Bill is ultra vires in so far as it affects other countries. Even if we had the consent of the British, Belgian and French Governments it would not be practicable to get these men to vote. We must not lose sight of the fact that the soldiers who are at the front are not under our control. They are British soldiers, and we are asking the officers to supply ballots to soldiers in trenches, and ask them to vote. It seems to me absurd, I heard the same expression from the gallery of the House of Commons. It seemed to me it is absolutely clear that this legislation is impracticable and useless. Supposing now, as I hope it will be the case, that the British Armies, with the good French soldiers will push the Germans back on to German territory, there will be thousands of soldiers in trenches on the German soil, and we will ask the British and French officers to carry the ballots into these German trenches, with the affidavits to the soldiers when at any moment the bugle may sound, and an engagement take place. It is really absurd and impracticable, and I think it is wasting the time of this House. I say that we ought to oppose the second reading of the Bill and I think all the members of the other House will be satisfied if we throw it out, because they are only making politics of this matter and nobody is serious about it. The Government is anxious to wave the flag with this Bill, and we do not want them to do that.

Hon. Mr. POPE—I object to the language of the hon. gentleman.

The SPEAKER—The hon. gentleman has no right to impute motives to members of the other House.

Hon. Mr. CHOQUETTE—I have a right to say that that is the reason it is brought here. I say the Opposition were forced into a corner and they did a little flag waving too, but that is not a serious matter. I do not regard this as a sensible Bill. Take the first reason given by my hon. friend the leader of the Government. He says that on a certain day after the writ is issued the officers will take the ballots to the soldiers in the trenches. Supposing it is possible for them to do that, Kitchener may have a guard at the camp who will allow

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no man to go there. If these officers take the ballots to the trenches there must be some discussion in the trenches. The soldiers will not vote like blind men; they are not allowed to see the papers, but the soldiers are not fools, they are intelligent men. They are going to ask the returning officer, "Is there an election going on?" Which Government is in power? Who is the leader of the Government? Who is the leader of the Opposition, and who are the candidates. That is the sort of question the sensible voter will put. We have that in every election. A great many members of this House came here without ever having fought an election, but those who have been in elections know when the candidate goes to a voter he is asked certain questions which he must answer. In this form of ballot it says, that I vote for—no name. Surely he has a right to know who is the candidate. There are tens of thousands of soldiers there. The returning officer is obliged to answer questions. Is he going to call a meeting and address the electors, and say to them "There is the Government led by Sir Robert Borden—at least it was so two weeks ago, I do not know how it is now. Perhaps there may be a nest of traitors over there now." Perhaps he will say, "There is an independent candidate; it may be Bourassa, Lavergne, Blondin, Sévigny, or somebody else." Such questions have to be put and answered. The more I think of the Bill the more I am convinced it is a farce, and a mockery to the soldiers who are at the front, that an officer would go there without being able to instruct these men for whom they are going to vote. Now they would say: Would you vote for the Government and the soldiers would say, "Yes, vote for the Government." Take the city of Calgary. There may be two Tory candidates both supporting the Government. The soldier might say "I wish to vote for the best one, who is he?" Well, they don't know—Vote for the Government. Are you going to consider the soldiers over there are fools and blind men, who will not put questions, or are you going to appoint men who will make speeches to the soldiers? I do not say that the Government will ask them to do that, but that will happen. Even with the permission of Lord Kitchener, Sir John French, and General Joffre—which we have not got—the thing would be a farce.

Hon. Mr. DAVID—Do the hon. gentleman's remarks apply only to soldiers outside of the country?