

Mr. DAVIDSON: I think my hon. friend is correct. Residence is required for an income voter, but not for a property voter. The member for St. John said that the ordinary Canadian soldier who was serving at the front had not the option of deciding where he should vote; that he must vote in the district from which he comes. That may be true while serving overseas. But if he came from Nova Scotia and was proceeding under the Election Act in that province, he could select the county in which his vote should be cast if he owned property in several different counties and was not residing in any county in which he was registered as a voter. I cannot understand why the hon. gentleman, who has such a vast knowledge of the law, should, in view of these facts, lay down the doctrine that it is a great wrong for a soldier, fighting in Canadian uniform in a Canadian regiment, for the Canadian nation, to be allowed to vote if he had not been a resident of the country prior to the time he joined the colours. Yet, in all the years during which my hon. friend was a minister of the Crown, he was a party to allowing British subjects who were not resident in the Dominion to vote in Nova Scotia in large numbers. Let me give my hon. friend an illustration. A wealthy broker in the city of Boston, a British subject, was the owner of a certain mortgage on land in Nova Scotia. He was obliged to foreclose that mortgage and his solicitor in Nova Scotia bought the mortgage under foreclosure sale. That capitalist of the city of Boston, who, I suppose, never set a foot in Canada, is entitled to vote in this country. Yet, there are no screams from hon. gentlemen opposite because of that; there are no assertions that that is unfair. I cannot understand why these hon. gentlemen should discriminate particularly against our soldiers. In order that a man may have a vote, he must possess certain qualifications. He should have an interest in the country; he should have an intelligent insight into the country's affairs, and he should belong to the country. These qualifications are not always possessed by a voter, but it strikes me that if a person possesses these qualifications, he has a perfect right to vote. These qualifications the soldier who has joined a Canadian regiment and is fighting for this country at the front, even though he never resided in Canada, possesses to an eminent degree.

Section 1 of the Bill provides that this Act shall apply only to a general election held during the present war, or after the

conclusion of peace, but before demobilization. This is a war measure. Hon. gentlemen opposite say that a British subject who has joined a Canadian regiment but who has not previously been resident in this country has no right to vote because he has not an intelligent interest in the country's affairs; he does not know the issues. This Bill applies only to one election: to the election which it has been found necessary to hold in Canada during a period of war. The main issue at this time is how this war shall be conducted. That is the most important question that confronts the country at present—indeed, it is the only question. The question is not whether the member for St. John shall return to that post which he filled with such conspicuous notoriety under the late Administration—Minister of Public Works. The question is not which party shall be in power. The question is whether we shall have a country at all or not. We must decide whether we are going to have a country before we decide the lesser point as to who shall be the rulers of it. Who, then, are in a better position to judge of what is required in the conduct of this war than the men who are actually in the theatre of war? The hon. gentleman says that there are other questions besides conscription. He says that the question of equipment for the soldiers will have to be discussed; that the question of whether or not the Government did right in supplying the soldiers with the Ross rifle will have to be considered.

What better authority on that subject can you find than the soldier at the front? He knows what kind of boots were supplied to him. He knows whether the assertions made by hon. gentlemen opposite were true, or whether they were mere buncombe. He knows that the Ross rifle was put in his hands, but perhaps he does not know who is responsible for it. Possibly he is not well enough acquainted with history to know that it was the Liberal Government and the Liberal party that foisted the Ross rifle on the soldiers of this country, despite the fact that the British War Office, the highest authority on the subject, advised that Liberal Government that it was not well that Canada should have a separate rifle; that the type of rifle used in the British and Canadian forces should be uniform; that it was better for the Empire that Canada should adopt the Lee-Enfield. The soldier knows all about the boots; he knows whether or not there is partisanship in the giving of commissions in the army; he does not have to take the second-