

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK—In rising to discuss this Bill we have to consider the principle which may be said to be contained in it, of increasing the franchise under exceptional circumstances. I do not see that this House should in any way deal with a question of that kind unless it is shown that any large number of the people have asked that the franchise be extended in this way. The answer given just now by my hon. friend the leader of the Government, in answer to an inquiry, says that the Government has no knowledge that any request has been made for an extension of the franchise in the way proposed in this measure. Therefore, if there has been no demand on the part of the people for it, we are not antagonizing the people in dealing with this Bill in any way that this Chamber may think reasonable and right. As we are not dealing with a question of principle, it becomes a question of the advisability of passing such legislation as this. This Bill is naturally divided into two separate parts. The first part of the Bill deals with the question of men who have volunteered for the service of their country and who are now outside of Canada, and, therefore, if this Bill goes into effect they would have the opportunity of voting should a general election be brought on. But I would direct hon. gentlemen's attention to the 11th clause in the Bill, which says:

This Act shall only remain in force during this present war.

That shows that this Bill has been drafted and adopted for a certain purpose, in order that, should a general election be brought on while the present war is in progress, this legislation may be put into effect. As soon as the war is over this legislation ceases, and it would appear to me that the Government must have in contemplation the idea of bringing on a general election while this war is raging. Hon. gentlemen will hardly conceive it possible that any body would want to put this country into the throes of a general election, while this war is going on. The life of this Parliament will come to an end on the 6th October, 1916, giving us at least 18 months within which a great many changes may happen, changes that no one in this Chamber or outside of it can estimate at the present time. The result of those changes may be very wide and far-reaching, and the idea that this country should be involved in the throes of a general election, and discussing all the issues brought before the people under such circumstances, is almost

inconceivable in the minds of those who are anxious and interested to see that Canada should do the very best she can in helping the Empire. The effect of this legislation would be that if a general election is brought on, then the men who are fighting for the Empire outside this country would be put into the position of discussing political questions when their whole time, their whole attention, their whole energy should be devoted to accomplishing the work they have in hand, which is fighting for the principles which we all so strongly maintain. To one like myself, an Englishman, who has settled in this country, who has a son and other relations fighting in the forefront of the battle, it is inconceivable that their time and their attention should be diverted to the consideration of political issues in Canada. To put it from the point of view of the man at the front, I do not think that any man who has volunteered and is facing the possibility of laying down his life for his country, would want to be put up against this proposal of having to say whether the one party or the other in Canada should be returned to power at a general election he has other and to him much more serious things to think of; also as pointed out last night by my hon. friend from Portage La Prairie, this Bill does not in any way apply to all the men who have left Canada to fight in Europe. There are large numbers of men who are just as much entitled to vote as those in the Canadian Expeditionary forces, but who will not receive the benefit of this legislation if it becomes law. There is no proposal to help those men obtain a vote. We may have Canadians in a British regiment along side of Canadians in a Canadian regiment, and if this Bill goes into force, those in the Canadian regiment will have a right to vote, while the men alongside of them in the trenches in the British regiment will be refused the right to cast a ballot. I think that this is putting the whole situation in a very anomalous position. Then, again, the passing of this Bill puts Parliament in the position of passing legislation which we should not really be dealing with. It has been said that it is only enabling legislation—to enable a certain act to be done, but we are coming in contact with the military authorities in England and probably bringing on a conflict between the civil powers in Canada and the military powers in England. At present I do not think that we have any right to bring up such a question. What we should endeavour to do, what I