

introduction of a Bill. At the same time, I appreciate that this is a matter that members are very greatly interested in and I, subject to your authority, and with proper respect for the rules of the House, desire to say that if I can give any information I will be glad to do so. I was saying that the ballot, as we proposed, in my judgment, affords the most ample opportunity whatever may be the conditions for enabling the soldier to register his vote. When I was interrupted I was speaking of the general returning officer, and I think I have sufficiently pointed out what his functions are. They largely go into effect at the termination of the election for the purpose of getting the specific returns. With regard to the special returning officers, I think it will be found that the provision of the Bill has been drafted with a view to attaining as perfect impartiality as can be attained on the part of the officers charged with this very important work. In order to make two things possible—namely, first, that we should get the fullest vote of the soldiers that can be got, and, second, that the voting should be done before the termination of the voting on this side, and therefore before the possibility of knowledge being spread on the other side as to the results—it has been thought wise, and the Bill provides therefor, to extend the delay between nomination day and election day. In the Bill that is a period of four weeks. The best information that I have been able to gather rather leads me to the conclusion that that will be a sufficient delay, but that in particular is a matter upon which I shall be glad to receive any information that any hon. member may have with the view of considering whether perhaps it might not be desirable to make that period longer.

Sir SAM HUGHES: Delay after nomination day or after the general election in Canada?

Mr. DOHERTY: No, it is intended that the voting day in Canada shall be four weeks after the nomination day. Voting overseas is to begin on the day after nomination day and is to go on for the full period of four weeks until eight o'clock in the evening of the polling day in this country. Whereas the voter over here has one day in which he must poll his vote, the soldier has twenty-nine days. At any time during that period he may avail himself of the opportunity to register his vote. Provision is made for the most widespread possible establishment of polls; that is places where the soldiers may register their

votes. It is in contemplation that these should be established at every place where there is a gathering of soldiers. In the Bill we speak of "every camp" with reference to polling places, but we have put in a definition clause to make the word "camp" cover every place, be it hospital or rest station, or whatever may be the nature of the place where there is a group of soldiers.

We have made a further provision, that where circumstances are such as to give rise to the belief that if a soldier is not allowed to vote immediately when and where he is he may be exposed to lose his vote—if conditions are such as to make it possible for the presiding officer to take his vote—that officer shall be empowered, even though he is not actually holding a poll to take the vote of that soldier. The desire is to do anything that can be done to assure to the soldier the exercise of his privilege, and to assure to Canada the advantage of having the expression of opinion of that soldier, the only limit being such as may be necessary to surround the voting with the greatest possible precautions against any irregularity or fraud, or anything of that sort, under the conditions as existing upon the other side. The military voter in Canada, save that he has to use the ballot as provided for the overseas soldiers, is, in the marking of his ballot, to conform to the requirements looking to secrecy, which are provided for the ordinary taking of votes over here. There are detailed provisions as to the manner of taking the vote. I do not think they are materially different—though in some respects I hope they are improved—from the provisions of the existing law.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I suppose the votes can be gathered in the hospitals?

Mr. DOHERTY: Oh, yes. We intend to send to every place where we can conceive that soldiers will be found a deputy presiding officer to take the vote.

Mr. MARCIL: Is the provision in the old Act, requiring the appointment of a number of commissioners by the leader of the Government and the leader of the Opposition, to provide the taking of the ballot overseas, to be retained?

Mr. DOHERTY: For the appointment of scrutineers?

Mr. MARCIL: Yes.

Mr. DOHERTY: Yes, that is preserved, and there are further provisions with regard