

tion was called to-day, but the answer is not ready. It will be ready at the next sitting of the House. The question is so wide that it covers not only the information that my hon. friend desires, but other information dealing with the same subject. I think he coupled, with the statement he made the expression of a desire for certain information regarding some canteen fund that has reference to Canada. If so, that information would not be in the answer; it will have to be added by the Department of Militia and Defence.

RUMOURED CLOSING OF DISTRICT PENSION OFFICES.

On the Orders of the Day:

Mr. C. G. POWER (Quebec South): I should like to direct the attention of the Government to a rumour which has been widely prevalent to the effect that certain district offices of the Board of Pension Commissioners have recently been closed and that others are about to be closed within the next few days, notably, Regina, Victoria, Charlottetown, Sydney, Quebec, North Bay, and seven or eight others. Is the Government aware that by closing these district offices they will seriously inconvenience—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member should be content with putting his question.

Hon. Mr. ROWELL: I will make inquiries and ascertain whether there is any foundation for the rumour. Undoubtedly the Board of Pension Commissioners wish to keep the expenses of administration within as reasonable limits as possible consistent with giving due care to the pensioners.

DOMINION FRANCHISE ACT.

SECOND READING OF BILL NO. 12 MOVED BY HON. HUGH GUTHRIE.

Hon. HUGH GUTHRIE (Minister of Militia and Acting Solicitor General) moved the second reading of Bill No. 12, respecting the election of members of the House of Commons and the Electoral Franchise. He said: In moving the second reading of this Bill may I be permitted to say at the outset that it is somewhat doubtful at the present moment whether we have any valid and subsisting law of this Parliament under which the will of the electors of Canada might be recorded, or otherwise made known at the polls, through the medium of a general election, if at any time a dissolution of Parlia-

[Sir Edward Kemp.]

ment were to take place by law, or if perchance for any other reason it might be deemed appropriate and expedient to dissolve the House. As the House is aware there is a special Act in force at the present time which makes provision both for the franchise and for the conduct of an election, but that special Act is by its own terms expressly limited in its application to by-elections. It is known as the Dominion By-Elections Act, and under the terms of that special Act certain by-elections are now being held in Canada. That Act, however, has no application whatever to the case of a general election. Consequently if a dissolution of Parliament should take place—either by the expiration of the time limited under the British North America Act, or if for any other reason the Government should see fit at any time to tender advice to His Excellency to the end that Parliament should be earlier dissolved—we might find ourselves in rather an awkward predicament. We certainly should find ourselves in rather an uncertain situation as to whether we had at this time in Canada any adequate and subsisting law either to fix the franchise or to govern the conduct of a general election. To avoid that uncertainty and that unsatisfactory condition of the law in the future, and to render definite and certain what might otherwise be uncertain, this Bill is brought before the House at the present time.

When I mention the matter of doubt in regard to the present status of our election laws, may I be permitted to explain that any doubt which may exist upon the subject, exists by reason of certain contingencies and the happening of certain events upon which certain important portions of our legislation, which were passed under rather extraordinary conditions, were made dependent. The Dominion Elections Act of 1908, with amendments passed from time to time, continued in force down to the year 1917. During the year 1917 somewhat radical amendments were introduced into the law—

Mr. LAPOINTE: Hear, hear.

Mr. GUTHRIE:—under the provisions of a certain Act passed in that session and known as the War-time Elections Act, and further amendments were made to the Dominion Elections Act during that session under the provisions of another Act known as the Military Voters' Act. Both of these last mentioned enactments were undoubtedly in the nature of war measures. Each of them was duly approved by this Parliament with