

assistance and such inducements as will make the settlement of these men upon the land a success. That is one of the subjects which I hope to have an opportunity of discussing when I visit Great Britain this winter. I know that any measures which may be taken by the Federal Government for that purpose will have the hearty co-operation, as to purpose at least, of all hon. gentlemen in this House. We may differ as to details and as to methods, but I know there is no one on either side of the House who would not heartily join with the Government in any well devised effort to accomplish such a result.

I shall come in a moment to some of the more direct observations of the right hon. gentleman who leads the Opposition, but before doing so, I shall say a word with reference to the paragraph in His Excellency's speech respecting the extension of the Parliamentary term during the period of the war. I do not purpose to argue that question to-night; it would be undesirable that I should do so after what has fallen from my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier). I simply desire to put my view in a very few words. I stated the reasons for the proposal last year, and as far as my comprehension goes, the reasons which I then advanced are equally cogent to-day. I stated to the House at that time the view which had been taken by the press of the country, the view which had been expressed by certain hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House, the view which had been expressed in very cogent terms indeed by my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition, when he emphasized the very great undesirability of having an election during the progress of the war. He went so far, if I remember his language correctly, as to say that while he did not have the greatest possible confidence in the Government of the day he never intended to open the portals of office with a bloody key. Well, the casualties and the perils to-day are not such as to make that observation any less cogent now than it was then. I should like to express one thought I did not express last year, and have hon. gentlemen on both sides of the House take it into account, and it is this: I was at the front in the summer of 1915. Before a general election can take place we shall have perhaps 200,000 or 250,000 or 300,000 men in France. I know something of the conditions at the front, and I venture to put this thought before the House and the

country: the men at the front will be not only practically, but actually, disfranchised if an election does take place in this country while they are in the trenches. That is my conviction. I say they would be actually disfranchised because, although I render every tribute to my hon. friend the Minister of Justice (Mr. Doherty) and the committee which had in hand the preparation of the Soldiers Voting Act of 1915, I am not disposed to think that the arrangements made in that Act or in any other act that could be devised are such as to enable those men to vote, or at least any considerable number of them. You cannot predict what conditions may exist. Suppose an election came on in this country when the fiercest drive of the war was taking place. Do you imagine that the paymasters of those regiments and their commanding officers could busy themselves with handing out ballots to men whose souls were engrossed and whose lives were at stake in the enterprise in which they were engaged? There is something more than that. These men at the front have it not in their disposition—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I say that those men at the front have it not in their heart or their soul to consider matters of party controversy under the conditions with which they are there confronted. I believe those men would want to put aside any one who came to talk to them about political issues or partisan controversy, under conditions of life or of death, of victory or of defeat such as confront them in the trenches or while making a drive to bring this war to an end. Further than that, there may be perhaps a hundred thousand men not in France. You might be able to have some of those men vote for Government or for Opposition, not for a candidate, as provided in the Act alluded to; but do you imagine that those men who are putting their lives to the supreme test in going overseas to fight for their country, will be greatly interested in political issues, or that they will desire to hear political speeches, or that they will welcome the distribution of partisan literature? I am not saying whether or not these considerations should determine the issue, but I do say that they are considerations that must be taken into account by every member of this parliament when upon him the responsibility falls as to whether or not there shall be a general election during this war, and I leave it at that.