

being in the House when this Bill was introduced last week, and I desire to say that the matters involved in this measure are very far-reaching in their character. The proposition that the military control of our forces overseas should be under the direction, not of a military officer but of a civil officer, who would be an overseas Minister of Militia, does not seem to me to be the proper method of dealing with the problem. If we look at the conditions that exist in the other overseas dominions with reference to the control of the men who have gone across the ocean, we find that the direction of their forces is administered by military officers. In Australia, which has sent a great number of men across the ocean, the General Officer Commanding the forces there before the war is the man who is in control of everything in connection with their disposition and management there in conjunction with the High Commissioner of Australia, who, I assume, looks after civil matters. The House and the country are aware of the fact that during the last year complaints of the most serious character have been made as to the methods of administration of the troops across the ocean. Every hon. gentleman who has been in touch with men who have returned from the other side know that complaints have been made by our men with reference to the way in which Sir George Perley, who is minister overseas, deals with these questions. Sir George Perley may be a very clever man, but the problem of dealing with men who are going to fight is of such a character that I do not care how clever a man may be whose training has been wholly in business and civil life, he cannot possibly, if he is the "last word" and final director of matters, be as good a person to deal with these questions as a man of military experience would be. Yet it has been found necessary by the Government to urge upon the House and the country that Sir George Perley, who knows nothing about military matters, and who, I presume, does not pretend to know anything about military matters, should be the man to direct all such matters overseas.

In connection with the direction of this war we in Canada are in a very peculiar position. I have frequently referred in this House to the fact that since the war began we have not had any General Officer Commanding who has had any distinctive position or military record, or who has been in such a position

[Mr. Macdonald.]

that the country and those interested in the boys who have gone overseas can feel that, so far as all our military dispositions are concerned, we have had that proper control which will give the best results. We all know of the several men who have been sent over by Great Britain, by arrangement with this Government and the previous Government, to fulfil the position of General Officer Commanding in Canada. We had General Mackenzie, who returned shortly before the war; we had General Lake, we had Lord Dundonald and various other men who had military training and experience in Great Britain, and who occupied this office and who were known throughout the country by every one connected with military matters as having special knowledge and fitness for the position. But in Canada to-day the man who is in charge of the whole military forces of the country is General Gwatkin, who was not a general at all until after the war began. We have in the person of our hon. friend the present Minister of Militia (Sir Edward Kenp), a gentleman who, according to the rule of the statute, deals with the civil side—if the expression may be properly used—of the administration of military matters. But General Gwatkin, who was a Colonel employed simply in a subordinate position in the Militia Department when the war broke out, has, so far as any one in Canada who knows anything about military matters is concerned, not exercised any direction with reference to the mobilization of our forces, nor in regard to other military matters, nor has he appeared in any of the camps throughout the Dominion to deal with or control operations. He seems to have taken it for granted that what we can do in Canada is simply to take our boys with all their cleverness, ability and brightness, and with all the bravery that they have shown on the battlefield, and to assume that the science of war is a science that any one can master, and that there is no necessity for having their direction and control properly secured. In South Africa General Smuts and General Botha were men who had had experience in war, and whose judgment and direction controlled the forces of that country. In Canada we have never pretended in any way, so far as military control is concerned, to have any one in charge of the military forces of this country, except General Gwatkin.

Mr. R. B. BENNETT. He was Chief of the General Staff.