

shall be administered. Some of the subjects whom it is proposed to dispossess of the franchise came to Canada fifteen, twenty-five or thirty years ago. They did not all become naturalized immediately. Some of them came from the United States. They had been Americanized before they were Canadianized. They had learned the benefits and blessings of representative institutions. They had agreed to respect the American constitution and then afterwards the Canadian constitution, which is framed on the British constitution. They have worked for and increased the wealth of their adopted country. They had been invited by this Government to come here in large numbers. The countries of Europe were scoured by our immigration agents to find people to come and settle the unsettled plains of the western provinces. Now, Mr. Speaker, for political purposes, for the purpose of retaining power, the Government propose to infringe the most sacred rights of citizenship and to disfranchise a large class of people who have shown themselves to be loyal, who have shown that they love the country of their adoption, and some of whom have offered their services as soldiers in the armies of the Allies. Those who have not offered their services have given largely of their means to help the cause. I remember that when it was rumoured that a Franchise Bill would be presented by the Government to disfranchise a certain number of people in this country, one of the principal organs of the Government, the *Montreal Gazette*, discouraged the Government from bringing such a measure before the House and condemned any measure of disfranchisement. Another of the principal organs of the Government, the *Mail and Empire of Toronto*, in an article published on the 7th of this month, justified this measure only on the plea that the Liberals had opposed the extension of Parliament and had refused to join in a union or national government. That is the only excuse offered by that journal for this action of the Government. One of the principal newspapers of this country, which, though not usually supporting the Government has been supporting it on the Military Service Bill and other important measures, strongly condemns this Bill. In an article which appeared on the 7th of this month, the *Toronto Globe* had this to say:

The Disfranchising Bill.

The War-Time Election Bill is a party measure. The attack on the political rights of a [Mr. Proulx.]

large group of foreign-born Canadians is tempered by their exemption from combatant service, but the principle of the Bill is wrong. It is inconsistent with national honour and British traditions. When men of alien birth were given their naturalization papers they were also given the full privileges of Canadian citizenship. It was a contract to which the good faith of the country was pledged. The Bill will cancel the chief article of the contract, the franchise, without proof that the voter has forfeited it by conduct unbecoming a patriotic Canadian. The presumption of innocence until guilt be proved, which underlies the common law, is reversed. It is true that the disability applies only to men who have been naturalized within the past fifteen years, but the country offered them the franchise three years after their arrival, in order to hasten the process of Canadianizing them. It is now proposed to deprive them of the badge of citizenship.

The Bill is aimed at the large element in the West of German and Austrian birth. These men came to Canada to escape the conditions of life in their native lands, and they came upon the invitation of the Canadian people, whose agents scoured Europe for immigrants to till the empty prairies. They have added immeasurably to the wealth of the country. During the war they have given no trouble as a class; one hears no echo among them of the seditious propaganda of Teutons across the line. Many are Ukrainians—the Galician branch of the family—whose sympathies, formerly with Austria, though never troublesomely so, have turned to Russia since the Revolution, which has given a new hope and vision to their race in Europe. Disfranchisement will be only for the period of the war, but the memory of it will survive for a generation, and will tend to undo the great work of assimilation carried on by the schools, the churches, and, not least, by the ballot, the pledge of their civil and political equality. The Bill is therefore not good national policy. It is more German than Canadian or British in its character.

I think this Bill and its provisions are very well characterized, by this article of the *Globe*. It is my belief that this is not a Bill which is fathered by the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden) or even by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir George Foster). I believe that my right hon. friends, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Trade and Commerce, who come from the Maritime Provinces, who were reared in the provinces bathed by the sea, who have breathed the freedom of those provinces and of Canada, would not be guilty of such an infringement of British and Canadian rights. I rather ascribe this measure to the Secretary of State (Mr. Meighen). He comes from the West, and in the West, well, they take chances—they are more addicted to gambling; they do things that are not done in the eastern provinces. I believe that this is a penalizing measure, and that if the negotiations for a union and national government had succeeded the measure, would not have been introduced. But as these negotiations