

chise law taken together, are quite drastic enough. To do more would not be in the best interest of the Canadian people. As the law stands a native Canadian or a British-born immigrant unable to read or write can exercise the rights of citizenship, but no person of alien birth, whether from an Allied or an enemy country, can become a citizen and make his influence felt at the polls until he or she has "an adequate knowledge of either the English or the French language."

### THE RIGHT TO VOTE.

The new Dominion Franchise Bill appears to be drafted with the purpose of securing for all British subjects, male and female, above the age of twenty-one years the right to vote at Parliamentary elections. The only important qualifications required are residence in Canada for twelve months and in the constituency for two months. Some of the clauses of the measure providing for the preparation of the voters' lists may require amendment, particularly those dealing with the compilation of the lists in rural municipalities, but, speaking generally, the Bill should prove acceptable to Parliament and the country.

Criticism is directed against the measure because it does not bar from the polls citizens born in countries with which Canada had been at war until recently, and who under the War Times Election Act were forbidden to vote at the general election of 1917. On that occasion no citizen of enemy origin, naturalized subsequent to March 31, 1902, was permitted to vote unless such citizen was actually serving in Canada or overseas in the military or naval forces of the Empire, or was the grandparent, parent, son or brother of a person so serving, or had offered for enlistment and been rejected as medically unfit. To renew this prohibition in the Franchise Act now under consideration would involve the exclusion from the polls of thousands of persons who took out their papers of citizenship during the years from 1902 to 1914, and who have become thoroughly Canadianized during their long residence in the Dominion. The unfairness of this is so evident that no Government desiring to dispense even-handed justice would stand sponsor for a measure of disfranchisement so drastic.

The cases of the very considerable number of persons born in enemy countries who had not thought it worth while making application for citizenship prior to 1914, although resident more than the three years necessary for qualification as such, are not dealt with in the Franchise Bill because they were provided for in the Naturalization Act adopted last session. There are a good many thousand of these "enemy aliens" in the Dominion, chiefly in Ontario and the Prairie Provinces, who are subject to special disabilities under the naturalization law. Aliens generally are entitled to the rights of citizenship on application, provided they have resided in Canada for at least one year, and in Canada or some other British country for a further period of four years within the last eight years before the application. The applicant must have an adequate knowledge of either the English or the French language, and must take the oath of allegiance as a condition of naturalization.

These provisions apply to all aliens who desire to become British subjects. In the case of those designated as "enemy aliens" the conditions are much more onerous. The Act provides that:

"No certificate of naturalization shall, before the expiration of a period of ten years after the termination of the present war, be granted in Canada to any subject of a country which at the time of the passing of this Act was at war with his Majesty, but this provision shall not apply to a person who, (1) having served in his Majesty's forces, or in the forces of his Majesty's Allies, or of any country acting in naval or military co-operation with his Majesty, was not discharged from such service by reason of his enemy nationality, sympathy or associations; or (2) is a member of a race or community known to be opposed to the enemy Governments; or (3) was at birth a British subject."

The practical effect of this measure is that no one of German, Austrian, Bulgarian, or Turkish birth—except persons such as Bohemians, Alsace-Lorrainers, Italians of the Tyrol, Armenians, etc., known to be in sympathy with the Allied nations—shall be admitted to Canadian citizenship till 1929. Some of the persons so excluded may have come to Canada so long ago as 1911 with the intention of becoming citizens after they had qualified by three years' residence. Probation in their case will extend over eighteen years, which would appear to be sufficiently long to please anyone who fears the effect of the "alien enemy" vote in Canadian politics. Exclusion for life, as suggested recently at a recent gathering in Calgary, would enable the "Outlanders" to declare that British justice and British liberty have forsaken the land.

The naturalization law and the fran-