

ELECTION IN WAR TIME.

Sir:—On more than one occasion, both privately and publicly, I have strongly criticized the evident determination of certain political gentlemen who favor the holding of an election during the continuance of hostilities. In thus expressing myself I have simply placed on record what is the thought of ninety-nine out of every hundred patriotic Canadians.

Yet, in spite of the general disapproval that has greeted this attempt to force an election, those who have the interests of party at heart, rather than that of country, are persisting in the propagan~~da~~ which started several months ago.

The more one ponders on this the more obstinate becomes his conviction that it is the rankest kind of treason to the men at the front to hold a khaki election.

What right have we who have not gone to the front for one reason or another to deprive of their franchise the hundreds of thousands of noble men who have expressed their willingness to make the supreme sacrifice. These men are entitled to our first consideration. It is they who are battling and laying down their lives in order that the institutions which we cherish with so much regard may prevail. These men are our veritable saviours. Yet, we think so little of the sacrifices they have made, and their determination to maintain British principles of justice and freedom at the price of their blood, that we gladly would deny them the right of participating in the election of a Government to administer the Dominion.

I lay it down as a fundamental political proposition that those who are willing to defend their country with their lives are the only ones who should be called upon to elect

an administration. This would be balancing privileges with responsibilities. I would not deprive of the franchise those who for causes beyond their control, could not serve their king. That is the only exception which should rightfully be made.

There are, however, several other phases of this question, which the average man may not think of when the question of an election is being discussed.

In the first place, we must not forget that Canada's population is a dual one. Some of the provinces have contributed a larger quota of men to the expeditionary force than others. Yet, should no provision be made for the men at the front being able to cast their ballots, these more patriotic provinces would be penalized to the extent of the number of their men on the firing line.

Secondly, we have a large foreign population containing a goodly percentage of alien enemies, who have become naturalized Canadians. These are entitled to vote. How absurd the whole situation becomes is manifest when the question is discussed from this standpoint.

Effective means for criticizing the Government still exists in our press and the right of free speech, which is one of the traditions of British democracy. The Government knows that it will one day have to face the public, and submit its statement, and having this in mind we can rest assured that it will seek by every possible means to avoid blunders or be guilty of acts that would bring down upon it well-deserved punishment.

Even though the Government may be thoroughly convinced of its ability to carry the country, it cannot, nevertheless, in justice to the men of the expeditionary force allow an election to take place. To do so would not be playing the game fair.

We have been told that the other Dominions of the Empire have held elections, notwithstanding the war. To this we can answer that the same conditions do not prevail in those parts of the Empire as obtain in the Dominion of Canada, and if circumstances alter cases, we cannot regard a khaki election from the same standpoint as those of the electors of Australia, New Zealand, and even South Africa.

The war is not yet won, and until it is, we owe it to ourselves and to the British Empire, and above all, to the men in the trenches, to devote the whole of our time and thought to the carrying on of such work as will hearten our soldier boys and quicken the termination of that labor that has for its object the redemption of the world from the lust of the spirit of conquest.

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