

The Political History of Mr. W. T. R. Preston, Liberal Organizer

During Debate in House of Commons Mr. Edwards Shed Some Light on the Scandalous Political Career of the Man Who Seeks to Reflect Upon Hon. Arthur Meighen.

The leader of the Opposition initiated a debate on the telegram alleged to have been sent by Mr. Arthur Meighen to Sir Robert Borden requesting a special allocation of the floating soldier-vote for western constituencies. The alleged telegram was made public for the first time by Mr. W. T. R. Preston at the Liberal convention in August and at the close of the debate in the House when a photograph of the draft was produced by Mr. McKenzie. Mr. Meighen declared it to be an absolute forgery. Mr. McKenzie did not seem to be at all proud of the part he was playing in introducing this matter to the notice of the House and at the last moment tried to avoid a debate, being anxious only to get his case into the House when a press photograph of the draft was produced by Mr. McKenzie. Mr. Meighen, on the other hand, was frustrated however, and the following trenchant exposure of Mr. Preston and his Liberal friends came with crushing effect from Mr. J. W. Edwards of Frontenac after Mr. Archambault tried to kill the debate by a four hours' speech, a rehearsal of an eighteen months' odyssey in which he had been badly worsted.

MR. EDWARDS (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the many friends of the Liberal member for Chambly-Vercheres (Mr. Archambault) will be glad to see that his health is in the excellent state that he has shown it to be in tonight. He has held the attention of the House, more or less, for the last four hours in an endeavor to make out a case. Now I would not like to say anything uncomplimentary about my hon. friend, and I could not say that he had a good case without being uncomplimentary to him. Had he possessed a strong case, my hon. friend had sufficient ability to have presented the strength of that case in much less than four hours. The weakness of the hon. gentleman's case is shown by the length of time which he has spent in picking out shreds and patches from the evidence taken by Mr. Justice MacLennan. I have heard that it is a custom or rule among lawyers not to have the attention of being a member of that learned profession I am not able to speak as to its truth—that when a lawyer gets the worst of it in a case it has always been regarded as his time-honored privilege to go down to the nearest tavern and abuse the judge who gave the decision against him. From the evidence which I have heard of, my hon. friend will know whether or not there ever was such a custom. Of course my hon. friend could not follow that course in the province of Ontario. He probably availed himself of that privilege in the province of Quebec after the decision was given by Mr. Justice MacLennan, but as to that I could not say. But he has certainly availed himself of the privilege of abusing the judge in language as strong as the rules of this House will permit, because that judge was fit to give a decision against him.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: Will the hon. gentleman allow me to put a question?

MR. EDWARDS: My hon. friend will have to possess his soul in patience.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: Perhaps it was a case of following my hon. friend's example in his attacks upon Sir Charles Fitzpatrick.

MR. EDWARDS: I am very pleased to see that my hon. friend has not exhausted all his vitality in a lifetime which he has devoted to this case.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: It is early yet.

MR. EDWARDS: If my hon. friend finds his vigor boiling over and cannot repress it, let him avail himself of some future occasion to introduce a resolution or to make a motion which will give him a further opportunity to spend another half or three-quarters of a day in airing his eloquence in this House. It is not an unknown thing.

Disappointed Litigant.

It is not an unknown thing of course for lawyers when they get the worst of a case, to spend some time in abusing the opposing counsel or even casting reflections upon the judge who rendered a verdict against them. My hon. friend has succeeded in convincing every one that he made a very great mistake when he made charges in the first place, and that he rushed in where angels fear to tread, in making charges. Having rushed in rather hurriedly in the making of those charges he naturally had the decision given against him, and now he is advertising to the House and to the country that he feels very sore indeed because of that decision, my hon. friend in the course of his remarks, has stated that some 491 soldiers voted, or presented themselves to vote, at the poll in question. The returns of the general election show that there were only 137 votes polled in that constituency all told—ten for my hon. friend and 127 for his opponent. The difference between 137 and 491 is 354 soldiers' votes which must have been discarded. My hon. friend labored for hours, citing case after case, to show that men came forward who were under a misapprehension with regard to the law, thinking they had a right to vote in this constituency when the evidence went to show that they had resided in different parts of Canada. My Honorable friend furnishes figures to show that the votes were not recorded; that 354 of these votes were discarded because the voters had no residence, and he charges conspiracy. A conspiracy by whom? Might I ask, Mr. Speaker, in that regard this pertinent question: who was likely to benefit by the polling of those votes? Was it my hon. friend who only received 10 votes, or was it his opponent's 127? If those 354 votes were not discarded, who was most

likely to have obtained them, my hon. friend or his opponent? His opponent unquestionably, Mr. Speaker, was the one most likely to have obtained those votes. Then who conspired to deprive his opponent, the Government candidate, of votes? Was it the Government that conspired to deprive the Government candidate of his votes, or was there misrepresentation, as was stated by the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Meighen) in discussing this matter—a distinct and definite propaganda of misrepresentation to mislead voters and to try and get them to place their votes in constituencies where the parties responsible knew those votes would be discarded and could not be counted.

In regard to the charge that there was a conspiracy to rob soldiers of their vote, what do the facts show? That because of the propaganda of this man Preston, and others who were backing him up, some fifty thousand odd of these soldier votes were discarded. That was because the soldiers were misled by a definite propaganda intended to mislead them. Now what was the reason for that? Because hon. gentlemen opposite, Laurier candidates in the Dominion of Canada in 1917, knew perfectly well that they stood a mighty poor show of getting very many of the soldier votes. There is where your conspiracy comes in and that conspiracy worked out definite to the advantage, hon. gentlemen opposite. May I be permitted to call attention to this fact: my hon. friend in the four hours during which he spoke was dealing with what? He was dealing with the vote here in Canada. But the telegram which is the subject of debate today has reference to the overseas vote. My hon. friend's share of the soldier vote in Canada was practically the same as his share of the soldier vote polled overseas. However, before I leave this matter, I wish to quote for the benefit of the House, and to place on Hansard, a few words from the judgment of Mr. Justice MacLennan, who investigated the charges made by the hon. member (Mr. Archambault) who has just taken his seat.

The Judge's Finding.

Mr. Justice MacLennan dealing with this matter, states in his report as follows:—

This investigation was in consequence of representations—

The hon. judge is very kind in using the word "representations." He might have affixed another syllable there, I think.

—made by Mr. Joseph Archambault, member of Parliament, for the electoral district of Chambly and Vercheres, to the House of Commons on 22nd May, 1918, alleging that certain military officers at the Barracks of the Engineers' Training Depot in St. John in the Province of Quebec, on 17th December, 1917, had procured thereto in connection with the general election held on that date, committed perjury and were guilty of other misconduct whereby certain military officers, being members of said Engineers' Training Depot, were alleged to have been induced to commit perjury by falsely representing themselves upon oath to be unable to specify, or state in what place, or places, or electoral districts in Canada they had resided at any time, or their appointment, enlistment, or enrollment, or calling out on active service, for the purpose of having their votes applied to the electoral district of Chambly and Vercheres pursuant to the Military Voters Act, 1917.

That is what the Judge was called upon to investigate. I am not going to again place on Hansard many of the statements which have been quoted by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Archambault), but I want to quote this passage. The hon. Judge says:—

About one-half of the officers of the Engineers' Training Depot who voted at the general election had left on service overseas before Mr. Archambault had made his charges of perjury in the House of Commons and are still absent from Canada. All the remaining officers were brought before me and subjected to an exhaustive cross-examination by able and skillful Counsel selected by Mr. Archambault. Several of the officers who appeared had never before and none of them knew much about electoral districts. They were not politicians or political workers.

The right of soldiers as such to vote was new in Canada, and it is abundantly proved in the inquiry that there was a widespread conviction among not only military voters but civilians that every military voter had a right to apply his, or her vote wherever he or she saw fit.

The Greatest Political Trick.

Why, Mr. Speaker, is there any doubt in regard to that? Is there any doubt in the mind of the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Molloy) in regard to that? Did not that hon. gentleman write to his leader, the late Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier asking him to get for him some of the soldiers' votes at his constituency? Was there anything wrong in that action of the hon. member? Not at all. But there was a misapprehension on his part as to the soldier-vote—a misapprehension which was not confined to soldiers alone but was pretty general throughout the country. That misapprehension Mr. Speaker, I maintain was deliberately subjected to for purely purposes by hon. gentlemen opposite—or at least by the party supporting the hon. gentlemen opposite—who did everything in their power through the instruments of one of the greatest political crooks who ever lived in the Dominion of Canada, W. T. R. Preston, to deceive the soldier electors for the purpose of securing a seat in the House of Commons for himself. My hon. friend would not be counted, as he and the party he represented knew per-

fectly well they would be counted, if they went as the soldiers wanted them to go. But, Sir, Mr. Justice MacLennan makes this comment on the officers who testified before him:

The officers who were examined before me gave their evidence in a straightforward manner, and their conduct and demeanor while under cross-examination and the reasons they gave for their answers established their good faith and that they honestly believed they had the right to answer questions 6, 7, and 8 as they did. That disposes of the charge of perjury against the officers. In my opinion these charges are unfounded.

Let me add to that, Sir, this further statement at the conclusion of the Judge's report:

There is a further circumstance that the prevailing impression in military circles was that the questions could be answered in the manner suggested. The men read the Montreal papers and were greatly influenced by the result of the election. Mr. Rainville's public career on this stand on the important question before the country met with their approval. There were no improper inducements, representations, suggestions or other misconduct by the officers or any of them to influence any non-commissioned officer or man to commit perjury by giving false answers to the questions on the envelopes, and the non-commissioned officers and men who appeared and were examined did not, in my opinion, commit perjury in connection with their answers. The charges of perjury and subornation of perjury are unfounded.

That is the judgment of Mr. Justice MacLennan, Mr. Speaker. But it is not as my hon. friend (Mr. Archambault) would like it to be. My hon. friend picks passages here and there from the evidence and asks this House to pass upon his garbled scraps and condemn a judge who came to his conclusions on all the evidence, not on those extracts quoted by my hon. friend.

The Soldiers' Vote.

Now, there is one further remark of my hon. friend to which I wish to refer, because it elicited some rounds of applause from hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House. He said:—

Many of the members of this House were elected by this soldier vote.

That called forth a vigorous "hear, hear" from many hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House. There has been, Mr. Speaker, a deliberate and persistent attempt on the part of the leader of the Opposition and his followers to beg the people of this country to believe that the Government is in power and that many hon. members are sitting in this House because of the manipulation of the soldier vote. I want the attention of the House, Sir, while I refute that absolutely. I challenge any hon. gentleman opposite, from the leader of the Opposition to his most brilliant supporter, to go into the figures which I am now going to give, or to refute my argument based on those figures.

In Ontario.

In the first place, referring to the province of Ontario, there are 82 seats for the Dominion House. I hold in my hand the general election returns for 1917, which give the civil vote for each candidate and the military vote divided, showing those who voted in Canada, in the United Kingdom and on the continent of Europe. To what extent were those 82 seats influenced by the soldier vote? All but four of the members elected from the province of Ontario were elected by the civilian vote alone by enormous majorities, and of the 4 elected with the help of soldier votes 3 were Conservative-Unionists and 1 was a Liberal-Unionist. Is it unreasonable, Mr. Speaker, for me to argue thus: That we might fairly assume that a candidate would get as large a proportion of the overseas vote as he did of the vote at home? Is it unfair to argue that a man who received 75 per cent. of the vote polled here in Canada would like to receive 75 per cent. of the soldier vote overseas? If that is a fair proposition, then we will allow to each of these four candidates the same proportion of the vote polled overseas as that which he received of the soldier vote polled in Canada, and we will hand to their opponents all the soldier votes polled overseas over and above that proportion. This done, each of these four candidates still has a seat in this House, and has it by handsome majority. More than that; each could afford to give to his opponent several hundred soldier votes, and still hold his seat in this House. Where, then, is there, so far as Ontario is concerned, the slightest evidence of any manipulation of the soldier vote?

In Quebec.

I come next to the province of Quebec, which is represented in the House of Commons by six members. By the way, may I advert in this connection to a reference made by the hon. member for Brome (Mr. McMaster) to the Postmaster General (Hon. Mr. Blondin)? He said that the Postmaster General ran in two constituencies in Quebec, and insinuated that the Government, by manipulating these votes, diverted votes to that hon. gentleman in order to elect him. Well, if there was any intention of doing anything of the kind it was foolish for the Postmaster General to run in two constituencies, and this divide up the soldier vote might better have run in some constituency only and had all the soldier votes coming to him go to that one place. But I may inform the hon.

member for Brome that the Postmaster General, though defeated in that election in Quebec, polled nearly three times as many civilian votes as did the member for Brome. Further, of the 122 candidates in the sixty-five constituencies in the province of Quebec, only twenty candidates polled a larger vote than did the Postmaster General. So that although he did not get enough votes to force him to this House, the vote which he did receive showed that he had in very large measure the confidence of the people. But if there was any conspiracy to elect the Postmaster General, why were those who were handling the thing so remiss that they did not place him fairly before the country? Were thrown to the Postmaster General to make sure of his election? Why was it not done? You have only to look through these election returns. The figures given in respect of the various constituencies carry with them a refutation of the charge or insinuation which has been made by the hon. member.

There is not a single member of this House from the province of Quebec whose seat could have been influenced in any way by the soldier vote. Every member from Quebec holds his seat in this House absolutely regardless of the soldier vote. Every member from the province of Quebec could have given his whole soldier vote to his opponent, and still have his seat in this House by a considerable majority. Where was the manipulation there?

In New Brunswick.

I pass on to the province of New Brunswick, which is represented by eleven members. Each of these members has a seat in this House by virtue of a majority of the civil votes. These civil votes totalled four figures in all seats—but two, and in one of these two the majority was two hundred and in the other eight-six. Are there any signs of manipulation there?

In Manitoba.

We now come to Manitoba, the only province to which this telegram is particularly referred. There are fifteen Federal seats in Manitoba. To what extent were those seats influenced by the soldier vote? All the Laurier candidates in Manitoba except three lost their deposits on the polling of the civil vote alone.

A Timber Wolf.

Now, how did that telegram go? Let us see; they wanted so many votes for Selkirk. The member-elect for Selkirk polled 4,712 votes to his opponent's 2,963. Apparently he did not stand very much in need of help from overseas. His opponent was a man by the name of Adamson. Adamson, where have I heard that name before? Adamson? That sounds very much like the name of a timber wolf, but I venture to say he is very closely related to the timber wolf that stole timber limits right and left in this country. That is where I have heard of Adamson. Adamson makes complaint about the manipulation of soldier votes. Well; let us see. It is the soldier vote overseas that is complaining of. Adamson got 4.3 per cent. of the home soldier vote, so that if the overseas soldier vote was manipulated against him he must have got even a smaller percentage of the overseas vote. But he got 6.9 per cent. of the overseas soldier vote—and if he is anything like the timber wolf, he was not entitled to one per cent.

Preston's Manipulation.

Well, Sir, what about Springfield? The opponent of the member for Springfield (Mr. Richardson) received only four per cent. of the home soldier vote, but 6.4 per cent. of the overseas soldier vote. Was there any manipulation overseas against him? I do not think so; the figures do not show it. But the member for Springfield had a clear majority of 1,147 of the civil vote, so that he could credit the whole soldier vote, 1,682, to his opponent, and still come in with a handsome majority. The same is true of the member for Macdonald. The only member of this House who received a smaller percentage of overseas soldier votes than he received of the home vote was the member for Provencher (Mr. Molloy). As the Minister of the Interior pointed out the "member for Provencher" may thank his stars that W. T. R. Preston and some of the other manipulators for the Laurier candidates got in their work overseas, or my hon. friend would not grace this House with his presence.

In British Columbia.

In British Columbia, with thirteen seats, all but one hon. member could have handed his opponent the overseas soldier vote and still won out. That one was the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Peck) who, as everybody knows, was overseas fighting valiantly for his country. He received a larger percentage of the overseas vote than that of the soldier vote at home; but if we give him only the same percentage as he received at home—and is that unreasonable?—he still could afford to hand his opponent a handsome number of soldier votes to win out. In Saskatchewan, with sixteen seats, credit every soldier vote to that province to his opponent and it would not deprive any member of his seat in this House. Was there any manipulation there?

In Alberta.

The same is true of Alberta, with the exception of Edmonton West. In that case if we give to the hon. member for that constituency (Mr. Griesbach) the same percentage of overseas vote that he received at home—and his opponent, was home working on the ground, while the hon. member was overseas—and the rest of the votes to his opponent, Hon. Frank Oliver, the member for Edmonton West, would still have 2,288 of a majority, and he could therefore hand over another 1,000 soldier votes and still retain a handsome majority.

I have gone to some trouble to arrive at these figures, but I wanted to place them fairly before the country. When hon. gentlemen opposite undertake to make the people of this country believe that there was manipulation of soldier votes overseas or on this side of the water which counted for the success of the Union Government at the last election, I say they are talking entirely outside of the facts. The facts do not warrant any such conclusion whatever.

"Cardinal" McKenzie.

I wish now to call attention to some of the remarks made by the hon. leader of the Opposition (Mr. McKenzie). I was very much pleased with his speech in one respect, in that it was not an ordinary speech in one very notable particular. For once in his life the hon. leader of the Opposition did not quote Scripture in making his speech. I am sure it was not because he could not quote Scripture. I have often thought as I looked across the floor of the House as he was quoting Scripture and putting on that pious sanctimonious look, rolling his eyes towards the ceiling, and bringing his hands together like this as he starts to quote, that if he would only turn his collar around hind-side before, half the members on this side of the House would take him for a bishop or cardinal.

He looks the part. I am sure he did not refrain from quoting Scripture because he did not know Scripture. I hope that his failure to quote Scripture in his speech the other day may be taken as evidence of an awakening conscience, that he did really think Scripture was too sacred to mix up with the dirty subject he was handling. I would not say that, if it were not for an expression the hon. gentleman used towards the latter part of his speech. Speaking of the officers overseas and their endeavor to influence the soldier vote he quotes them as saying:—

"Gentlemen, we do not want 99 per cent. of your votes; we want 100 per cent." That was the exhortation of generals, colonels and others from the top to the bottom, and for the poor man who might attempt to exercise his own right to vote was a place to which he would be consigned, and of which fact he was well aware.

May I ask my hon. friend to be more explicit? To what place does he refer? What is back of the words he uses there? I pause to give my hon. friend an opportunity to make his meaning more explicit. I do not want to draw an inference that is a wrong inference. Would my hon. friend tell me what he means by those words?

Mr. McKenzie "Nailed."

MR. D. D. MCKENZIE: I will answer my hon. friend. I have never hidden behind a bush from anybody. It is generally believed in this country that we will vote for a certain committee, that soldiers were told if they would not vote as told by their officers they would be immediately sent to the trenches, where likely they would be killed, and where some were sent and killed. That is what I mean and that is what I will prove.

MR. EDWARDS: That is what I thought the hon. gentleman meant.

MR. MCKENZIE: Certainly.

MR. EDWARDS: But I did not want to put words in his mouth. I wanted him to use the words which would express his meaning beyond a shadow of a doubt, and he has left us no shadow of doubt as to what he meant by those words. I want to say to the hon. gentleman who is possessed of wonderful courage in coming out from behind the bush, but who has not the courage to make his charges on his responsibility as a member of this House and thereby jeopardize his seat, and the extra 7,000 he gets out of it, that the imputation against the honor of the officers over which which has just fallen from his lips is in my judgment the worst libel that was ever uttered by any man on the floor of this House or outside.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. gentleman is exceeding the amenities of debate by accusing the hon. leader of the Opposition of uttering a libel.

MR. MCKENZIE: I would be surprised if he said anything else. Let the libel have his play.

MR. EDWARDS: I can give my hon. friend all the play he wants, and perhaps a little more than he wants.

MR. MCKENZIE: Come along, my boy, come along.

MR. EDWARDS: I can assure my hon. friend I may come along in a way he will not like.

MR. EDWARDS: I defy my hon. friend.

MR. EDWARDS: We will see before we get through. Mr. Speaker, if I am put in order in using the word "libel" I bow to your ruling and retract it. It was the word that occurred to me as best expressing what was in my mind, and I used it believing that it was properly applicable. I can understand the leader of the Opposition and some of his friends on the other side trying to discredit in every way they can the men overseas whom they did their best not to send assistance to.

Cunning Resort to Slander.

I can understand their attitude, Hansard, and the reports of their speeches throughout the country will show quite clearly the fact that they displayed an utter lack of appreciation of the serious position our men were in overseas. They showed absolutely no regard for the soldiers whose votes naturally went to the party which was pledged to support their noble but, till then, unequal fight over in Flanders. Hon. mem-

bers opposite feel sore at the result and the only way in which they can safely get back at the men who were fighting for the lives of us all is a cunning resort to slander, for the men, I am sorry to say, have been slandered on the floor of Parliament and outside as well. That is the plain fact, and there is no gaining anything, I can conceive, Sir, of nothing in the English language that can adequately characterize, as I think they should be characterized, the views of any honorable gentleman who makes such an accusation as has been directed across the floor of the House by the leader of the Opposition (Mr. McKenzie). I cannot conceive language befitting the circumstances, because, Mr. Speaker, your rules would preclude the expression of an opinion that would do justice to describing the honorable gentleman's conduct. After a lengthy speech yesterday he concluded by saying: I do not know whether the facts are exactly as I present them. I take no responsibility in that regard. He based his charges and his motion on an alleged telegram which he does not and cannot produce, and backs it up with the statement of some man who says he took part in the election overseas, but whose name he does not disclose. Now, Sir, if ever a case rested upon a flimsy foundation, undoubtedly it is the case presented by the leader of the Opposition in his speech yesterday.

Taking Soldiers' Vote.

Let us look into this matter for a while. An election was held, and it was decided by this Parliament to give to the soldiers an opportunity to record by their votes their opinion as to whether or not relief should be sent to them. There was a certain amount of opposition to that departure, as every one in the country knows. A great many hon. gentlemen opposite were not very enthusiastic about giving the soldiers the vote, and there were weighty reasons why they were not enthusiastic. However, arrangements were made for taking the vote. Certain officials were appointed. The Clerk of the Crown in Chancery was in duty bound to fulfill his office in connection with that or any other election. Who was he? Mr. Foley, a man appointed by the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The returning officer was Mr. W. F. O'Connor, in regard to whom the Minister of the Interior, the Hon. Mr. Meighen, has never been questioned. Special returning officers and clerks were appointed, half of them by the Government and half on the nomination of the leader of the Opposition. In the same proportion, six scrutineers were appointed, one of the three appointed by the Government being a former Liberal member of the House. Of the three scrutineers appointed by the leader of the Opposition I may refer particularly to one named W. T. R. Preston, better known as Hug-the-Machine Preston; and there is a certain man in public life who may probably be known by a somewhat similar appellation some day. His name will have as a prefix no hug-the-machine, but hug-the-machinist. I desire to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to some of the propaganda sent out by this man Preston. He was sent overseas as the appointee of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and it was his duty to look after the soldier vote polled in the United Kingdom. One or two of the pamphlets which he issued were referred to by the Minister of the Interior, who showed that the three classes into which the gentleman divided the soldiers were not in accordance with the Act, and that he must have known he was making a misrepresentation in his classification. He refers to one class as the American soldiers. Well, we have no American soldiers. He had no documents to guide him and there was no reason why he should have made any statement which was not strictly in keeping with the truth. There was one document prepared for the guidance of the voters. It states that a voter includes every person, male or female, who being a British subject—and so on. Instruction is given to electors under the Military Voters Act and there are instructions for the guidance of deputy presiding officers: Military voter "means" includes any person, male or female, who, being a British subject," etc. The pamphlets distributed throughout the country drew attention to the fact that every voter must be a British subject, and therefore when D. T. R. Preston represented, as he did in some of his advertisements, that voters were given to American soldiers he represented what he knew was false.

Preston's Lies.

Now I want to call the attention of the House to another little advertisement which was not referred to by the Minister of the Interior yesterday, an advertisement prepared by this man Preston who signs himself on behalf of the Liberal candidates. This advertisement appeared on December 11, 1917, in the Penrith Observer, a newspaper printed in Wales. I have an exact copy of the advertisement, which was sent back here by one of the returned soldiers to whom it was given to influence his vote. It was headed: "Vote for Sir Wilfrid Laurier and conscription." It goes on to tell the soldier: "Do not be deceived by misrepresentations, and the soldier has marked opposite that in pencil: 'won't' and I do not think, Mr. Speaker, that many of them were deceived. Now this is some of the literature distributed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier to represent his candidates in the election in 1917. Will some hon. gentleman opposite tell me that this entirely novel statement: "Vote for Sir Wilfrid Laurier and conscription," is consonant with the oft-expressed views of the Opposition in this House, and the oft-expressed views of the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier in regard to conscription? What was the object of such a deliberate falsehood? Every one in Canada knows that Sir Wilfrid Laurier was opposed to conscription, for he announced his opposition to the floor of the House and throughout the country, and the hon. gentleman who sat on the right and many others on the opposite side of the House expressed as their policy absolute opposition to conscription. They denounced con-

scription from one end of Canada to the other, but they realized that the soldiers overseas—the men who were doing their own work and that of three or four others, remaining two, three and four times as long in the front line as they should have done because relief was not forthcoming—were in favor of conscription and were determined at all costs to have proper reinforcements in order that Canada's battle line might be maintained in Flanders.

Consequently, notwithstanding their statements in this House and their statements throughout the country, statements made in order to capture, if possible, sixty-five seats in the province of Quebec, statements made with the deliberate intention of influencing those people in this country who were opposed to sending their sons overseas to do their part in this war—notwithstanding all that, they got out this pamphlet, sent it out among the soldiers and put an ad in the papers over there advising the soldiers to

Vote for Sir Wilfrid Laurier and conscription.

These words were in big type. An hon. MEMBER: Who appointed Preston?

Preston's Career.

MR. EDWARDS: This man Preston was appointed by the leader of the Opposition at that time, the late Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Inasmuch as this man Preston has had quite a lot to say about the soldier vote overseas, may I be permitted to say one or two words about W. T. R. Preston? In the first place, I think it would be well for the members of this House to know who this man Preston is and who he was. He was organizer for the Liberal party in the province of Ontario from 1883 to 1893. He was defeated when he ran as a candidate in Durham for this House in 1885. He was appointed librarian of the Ontario Legislature in 1893. About that time a man named H. H. Cook testified that this man Preston had demanded from him \$10,000 as the price of a senatorship. He not only made that statement, but he took his oath that such a demand had been made upon him by Preston. In 1896 Preston ran as a candidate for the House of Commons in West Toronto. The people of West Toronto knew him as well as they knew him in Durham. He resigned the librarianship to take charge of the campaign machine in the province of Ontario and from the time he took charge of the campaign machine it went from bad to worse in the way of corruption and scandals of all kinds, until the province of Ontario became disgraced in the eyes of the world.

He took a very active part in the election of a man by the name of Macnisch in West Elgin in January, 1899. Mr. Macnisch resigned because of the corruption which was disclosed on that occasion. Let me tell you one or two things that were done in that election. Preston was handling the gang in West Elgin.

An hon. MEMBER: The machine.

MR. EDWARDS: It was a bugging of the machine and he had with him the Pritchards, the Cap Sullivans, the Lewises and a lot more of those fellows of unsavory reputation. They went down on the Sunday before the election, Preston put on his Sunday air, went to the Sunday school and talked to the children. I presume he had on a regulation long coat, probably a silk hat, and perhaps looking as plump as the leader of the Opposition does sometimes. He quoted Scripture, spoke to the children, told them to be good, not to do anything wrong, and there were tears in his voice. Then he said: "Now, children, there is one hymn I want you to sing; I like it very much; I want you to sing it for me today as a special favor. 'There is sunshine in my soul.'" And so he got them to sing the hymn "There is sunshine in my soul." That was on Sunday afternoon. On Sunday evening he met the gang; they got the machine together in an upper room of the hotel and laid their plans for defeating the wishes of the electors of West Elgin, by frauding the electors of the right of making a choice at the polls. The election was held and after the election, Mr. Preston, not happening to be in the riding that evening, telegraphed from Toronto to Mr. Macnisch, the Liberal candidate in West Elgin, as follows:

Heartiest congratulations, sorry to the bottom of my heart I cannot be with you tonight.

I suppose if he had been there he would have asked them to sing "There is sunshine in my soul."

To be supported by such a noble army of workers should make you the proudest man in Ontario. Shake hands with the boys for me, and hug the members of the much-abused threshing machine for 'Auld Lang Syne'.

A Liberal Vote Switcher.

That telegram showed the intimate relations existing between Preston

(Continued on Page Seven.)

PLAIN FOOD

is transformed in a moment, takes on a new deliciousness, becomes savory and appetizing the moment you add a little

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MR. EDWARDS: I am very pleased to see that my hon. friend has not exhausted all his vitality in a lifetime which he has devoted to this case.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: It is early yet.

MR. EDWARDS: If my hon. friend finds his vigor boiling over and cannot repress it, let him avail himself of some future occasion to introduce a resolution or to make a motion which will give him a further opportunity to spend another half or three-quarters of a day in airing his eloquence in this House. It is not an unknown thing.

Disappointed Litigant.

It is not an unknown thing of course for lawyers when they get the worst of a case, to spend some time in abusing the opposing counsel or even casting reflections upon the judge who rendered a verdict against them. My hon. friend has succeeded in convincing every one that he made a very great mistake when he made charges in the first place, and that he rushed in where angels fear to tread, in making charges. Having rushed in rather hurriedly in the making of those charges he naturally had the decision given against him, and now he is advertising to the House and to the country that he feels very sore indeed because of that decision, my hon. friend in the course of his remarks, has stated that some 491 soldiers voted, or presented themselves to vote, at the poll in question. The returns of the general election show that there were only 137 votes polled in that constituency all told—ten for my hon. friend and 127 for his opponent. The difference between 137 and 491 is 354 soldiers' votes which must have been discarded. My hon. friend labored for hours, citing case after case, to show that men came forward who were under a misapprehension with regard to the law, thinking they had a right to vote in this constituency when the evidence went to show that they had resided in different parts of Canada. My Honorable friend furnishes figures to show that the votes were not recorded; that 354 of these votes were discarded because the voters had no residence, and he charges conspiracy. A conspiracy by whom? Might I ask, Mr. Speaker, in that regard this pertinent question: who was likely to benefit by the polling of those votes? Was it my hon. friend who only received 10 votes, or was it his opponent's 127? If those 354 votes were not discarded, who was most

likely to have obtained them, my hon. friend or his opponent? His opponent unquestionably, Mr. Speaker, was the one most likely to have obtained those votes. Then who conspired to deprive his opponent, the Government candidate, of votes? Was it the Government that conspired to deprive the Government candidate of his votes, or was there misrepresentation, as was stated by the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Meighen) in discussing this matter—a distinct and definite propaganda of misrepresentation to mislead voters and to try and get them to place their votes in constituencies where the parties responsible knew those votes would be discarded and could not be counted.

In regard to the charge that there was a conspiracy to rob soldiers of their vote, what do the facts show? That because of the propaganda of this man Preston, and others who were backing him up, some fifty thousand odd of these soldier votes were discarded. That was because the soldiers were misled by a definite propaganda intended to mislead them. Now what was the reason for that? Because hon. gentlemen opposite, Laurier candidates in the Dominion of Canada in 1917, knew perfectly well that they stood a mighty poor show of getting very many of the soldier votes. There is where your conspiracy comes in and that conspiracy worked out definite to the advantage, hon. gentlemen opposite. May I be permitted to call attention to this fact: my hon. friend in the four hours during which he spoke was dealing with what? He was dealing with the vote here in Canada. But the telegram which is the subject of debate today has reference to the overseas vote. My hon. friend's share of the soldier vote in Canada was practically the same as his share of the soldier vote polled overseas. However, before I leave this matter, I wish to quote for the benefit of the House, and to place on Hansard, a few words from the judgment of Mr. Justice MacLennan, who investigated the charges made by the hon. member (Mr. Archambault) who has just taken his seat.

The Judge's Finding.

Mr. Justice MacLennan dealing with this matter, states in his report as follows:—

This investigation was in consequence of representations—

The hon. judge is very kind in using the word "representations." He might have affixed another syllable there, I think.

—made by Mr. Joseph Archambault, member of Parliament, for the electoral district of Chambly and Vercheres, to the House of Commons on 22nd May, 1918, alleging that certain military officers at the Barracks of the Engineers' Training Depot in St. John in the Province of Quebec, on 17th December, 1917, had procured thereto in connection with the general election held on that date, committed perjury and were guilty of other misconduct whereby certain military officers, being members of said Engineers' Training Depot, were alleged to have been induced to commit perjury by falsely representing themselves upon oath to be unable to specify, or state in what place, or places, or electoral districts in Canada they had resided at any time, or their appointment, enlistment, or enrollment, or calling out on active service, for the purpose of having their votes applied to the electoral district of Chambly and Vercheres pursuant to the Military Voters Act, 1917.

That is what the Judge was called upon to investigate. I am not going to again place on Hansard many of the statements which have been quoted by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Archambault), but I want to quote this passage. The hon. Judge says:—

About one-half of the officers of the Engineers' Training Depot who voted at the general election had left on service overseas before Mr. Archambault had made his charges of perjury in the House of Commons and are still absent from Canada. All the remaining officers were brought before me and subjected to an exhaustive cross-examination by able and skillful Counsel selected by Mr. Archambault. Several of the officers who appeared had never before and none of them knew much about electoral districts. They were not politicians or political workers.

The right of soldiers as such to vote was new in Canada, and it is abundantly proved in the inquiry that there was a widespread conviction among not only military voters but civilians that every military voter had a right to apply his, or her vote wherever he or she saw fit.

The Greatest Political Trick.

Why, Mr. Speaker, is there any doubt in regard to that? Is there any doubt in the mind of the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Molloy) in regard to that? Did not that hon. gentleman write to his leader, the late Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier asking him to get for him some of the soldiers' votes at his constituency? Was there anything wrong in that action of the hon. member? Not at all. But there was a misapprehension on his part as to the soldier-vote—a misapprehension which was not confined to soldiers alone but was pretty general throughout the country. That misapprehension Mr. Speaker, I maintain was deliberately subjected to for purely purposes by hon. gentlemen opposite—or at least by the party supporting the hon. gentlemen opposite—who did everything in their power through the instruments of one of the greatest political crooks who ever lived in the Dominion of Canada, W. T. R. Preston, to deceive the soldier electors for the purpose of securing a seat in the House of Commons for himself. My hon. friend would not be counted, as he and the party he represented knew per-

fectly well they would be counted, if they went as the soldiers wanted them to go. But, Sir, Mr. Justice MacLennan makes this comment on the officers who testified before him:

The officers who were examined before me gave their evidence in a straightforward manner, and their conduct and demeanor while under cross-examination and the reasons they gave for their answers established their good faith and that they honestly believed they had the right to answer questions 6, 7, and 8 as they did. That disposes of the charge or insinuation which has been made by the hon. member.

Let me add to that, Sir, this further statement at the conclusion of the Judge's report:

There is a further circumstance that the prevailing impression in military circles was that the questions could be answered in the manner suggested. The men read the Montreal papers and were greatly influenced by the result of the election. Mr. Rainville's public career on this stand on the important question before the country met with their approval. There were no improper inducements, representations, suggestions or other misconduct by the officers or any of them to influence any non-commissioned officer or man to commit perjury by giving false answers to the