

looked at voters' lists. I always depend on my efforts to convince the electors that I should be their representative, and I have succeeded a great many times without troubling myself about the voters' lists. If this Bill is carried, it will give power to the Government to appoint men who may be unscrupulous—I do not say they will be—but if they are, they will not do much worse than has been done many times before. I was in Parliament when the present election law was passed, in 1874. I have never heard a murmur against it, and have never heard anyone express a wish that it should be changed. I, moreover, never heard anyone in my constituency express the desire that this Parliament should pass a Dominion Franchise Bill. The adoption of this measure will be attended with a great deal of expense, annoyance and trouble. It will prove of great annoyance in the different Provinces, to have two voters' lists. They have been in the habit of voting for both federal and provincial elections on one list. This is a change that is not necessary, and one that will be attended with much annoyance and dissatisfaction. I do not, moreover, see the necessity of it; and if I could influence the Government I would say: Consider this Bill, discuss it thoroughly, then withdraw, so that at the next session of Parliament we may be able to pronounce upon it.

Mr. SOMERVILLE (Brant). It is not often I trouble the House with any remarks in reference to any measure under discussion, but on this occasion I feel it to be the duty of every hon. member to express his opinion with respect to this important Bill introduced by the leader of the Government. I was of the opinion at the time it was introduced that we would hear a lengthy explanation as to the provisions of the Bill, but the First Minister saw fit to introduce it with but very few remarks, trusting, no doubt, that he would succeed in procuring the support of his followers without giving any further explanation. I suppose it was an understanding in caucus that it was to be put through at any cost, and that his supporters would sustain its provisions. There are one or two thoughts in connection with the Bill that I desire to present to the House. We have had presented during this Session a large number of petitions in favor of the maintenance of the provisions of the Scott Act. Not only have we had petitions from one end of the Dominion to the other asking that the Scott Act should be maintained as it is on the Statute Book, but that if any alterations were allowed, they should only be in the direction of making it more stringent prohibition. We find that the Government paid no attention to those petitions; that the leader of the Government, after being interviewed by a delegation, composed of members of Parliament, sent to him for the purpose of asking him to promote the legislation had in view to enable them to have provisions placed on the Statute Book which would enable them to enforce the Act—after some delay the hon. gentleman refused to comply with the request of that delegation. And so, in that respect, he set his face against the petitions which had been presented to the House, signed by thousands of the electors of this Dominion, asking for that special legislation. Now, in contrast with this, we find that they have introduced a Bill for the purpose of changing the whole electoral franchise of the Dominion, without giving any notice to the electors of this country. We find that there have been no petitions in favor of any change of the electoral franchise. We find that this Bill has not been discussed at any public meetings which have been held through the Dominion, and that at the last general election it was not talked about in any of the ridings. It is true the First Minister saw fit, in former Sessions of Parliament, as far back as the first meeting after Confederation—I did not know that until to-day—to speak about introducing this measure, and that from that time down to the present he

has annually re-introduced his Bill with reference to the franchise, whenever he has been on the Ministerial benches. I know that since I have been a member of this House this is the third Session that such a Bill has been introduced, and, of course, the fact that it has been allowed to drop every Session led the people to believe that he had no intention of putting the Bill on the Statute Book. The people have been led into this belief by the hon. gentleman's own action with regard to this measure, and, in consequence, it has not been discussed at public meetings or in the newspapers of this country. If that be the case, and from the fact that the present course is in direct opposition to the course suggested in the petitions sent in with reference to the Scott Act, I think he should give the people proper notice before introducing such a measure; especially when the present system has been accepted by the people of this country, and has been proven to be satisfactory, at least in the Province from which I come, and I suppose in the other Province as well. And why should it not be satisfactory to the people of those Provinces? They have had the control of the electoral franchise in their own hands, and I would like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, if the people, the men who send their representatives here to Parliament, the men who have had control of the matter, are not the proper parties to control it, if they have heretofore done so satisfactorily to themselves? Is it right that this Parliament should interfere with the rights of the people in this respect, any more than in any other respect? No better system could be adopted for purifying the electoral rolls than now prevails in the Province of Ontario. Those who come from that Province know that, in the first place, the assessor makes his assessment, which has to be approved by the municipal council. After that, notice is given that the court of revision will sit, to hear complaints with regard to the roll. The people go before men in their own localities, men whom they have elected to positions of trust in those localities, men in whom they have confidence. When the appeals are made to the municipal councils they are considered, the difficulties are adjusted, so far as possible, and after that they may be appealed to the judge of the county, an official appointed by this Government. I do not see why this Government should require any other official than the one we have now to supervise the preparation of the voters' lists. They have really now the control of the last revising officer, in the person of the judge; the lists are prepared in this way—in a way which is satisfactory to the people who elect these men to represent them in their local municipalities—and I cannot see why the Government should interfere with those rights and put over the heads of the people, who wish to control their own affairs, revising barristers, who will not be amenable to the people in any respect, who are appointed during good behavior, and I suppose good behavior means so long as they serve the purpose for which they are appointed. Now, we find that this system of having the different Provinces in the Dominion prepare their own electoral franchise, or rather attend to its preparation, is not a new one. As has been stated to-night already, in the United States this system has been found to work satisfactorily; it has given every possible satisfaction to that enlightened people on the other side of the line, and in the mother country the electoral franchise is not the same in England, Ireland and Scotland; and why should not the Provinces of this great Dominion have the right to settle their own franchise, and to say who shall be the people to send representatives to this Parliament? There is one point here upon which I wish to remark, and that is, that it does seem strange that the members of this House, sent here from all the different Provinces, should deliberately go to work to disfranchise some of the electors who sent them here, which will be the