

into force. The hon. member for York (Mr. Foster) stated we wanted to get away from the difficulty. Sir, this question is full of difficulties; it is surrounded with difficulties; and no people know it better than hon. gentlemen opposite, since, after a trial of their own law for twelve years, they admitted that they had not found the true solution of the question, and another law was to be desired. Nothing can be more conclusive than that this question is one of very serious difficulties. What should we do? That is the question. We propose a remedy which has in it the merit, if no other merits are visible to the naked eye, that it has been in operation nineteen years and given satisfaction. I propose to revert to it. But I come back to the proposition laid down by the hon. member for Kent, N.B. (Mr. McInerney). Suppose we were to adopt manhood suffrage as a principle, would that relieve us of the difficulties? I do not say but that perhaps it would relieve us of some difficulties, but not of all the difficulties of the case. Because if we adopt manhood suffrage as the Dominion franchise, still we would have to provide for the preparation of the lists.

An hon. MEMBER. Registration.

The PRIME MINISTER. I do not care whether you call it registration or preparation of the lists; we would have to follow the electors at an expenditure of time and money. If I remember rightly, it is not long ago in this House I heard the system of registration denounced by no less an authority than the leader of the Opposition. He denounced it as in force in Ontario, where it does not apply to all the municipalities, but only in cities and towns. It will be in the recollection of hon. members that the leader of the Opposition on that occasion attacked the system of registration prevailing in towns and cities. If we were to adopt manhood suffrage it would have to be done under a system of registration, and you would have the evils of that system extended all over the country, not only in towns and cities, but in the municipalities. Sir, I repeat what I said a moment ago, this question is one full of difficulties. How are we to meet it? We propose a system which has been in operation for nineteen years here. We propose a system that has been in operation in the United States ever since the establishment of the constitution. If there is anything better to be offered, I should like it now to be offered; but if we are only asked to adopt a system of registration, it will not at all remedy the evil, it will not relieve the expenditure necessary to-day; but if the House adopt the principle of the Bill we propose, we shall have a list prepared without any trouble, without any expenditure, and we will have, I believe, the best system of franchise and preparation of lists the country has had so far. I want to say a word more to my hon. friend, and it

will be my last. The hon. gentleman says if we adopt this Bill we will be abdicating our rights to determine the franchise for the purposes of this Parliament. But we will keep our control over the lists.

Mr. FOSTER. How do we keep control over the lists?

The PRIME MINISTER. I will show it very plainly. When this sovereign Parliament says the lists for elections for this House shall be those of the local legislatures this Parliament exercises its own power as if it were to say we shall have this or that franchise of our own.

Mr. FOSTER. Will the hon. gentleman allow me a question?

The PRIME MINISTER. Very well.

Mr. FOSTER. The hon. gentleman says that if we use our power to fix these local lists as the lists which shall rule in Dominion elections, do we not abdicate our power to that extent?

Some hon. MEMBERS. No.

Mr. FOSTER. You do not on one condition, and I want to know if the hon. gentleman is prepared to subscribe to that condition. Do you propose after delegating that power to local legislatures and adopting their lists as the franchise list for this Parliament, to say that there shall be no change in those lists by the local legislatures, except by permission of this Parliament on the one side; or do you propose next year to come and take the power out of the hands of those local legislatures? If you do not, you have delegated your power, which you have a right to do, but you have abrogated your power as regards any future usefulness.

The PRIME MINISTER. It is easy for hon. gentlemen opposite to pick flaws and create difficulties, but after all we must suppose there is some reason and conscience in them. Local legislatures are likely to represent the people of the province; they are elected to represent the same people we represent here, and no other people. It is supposed, and it is not a very violent supposition to make, they will exercise that power in the very best interests of their constituents, according to their judgment and light. It is supposed they will adopt the best franchise to suit the province. But I will go further. Let us suppose that everything the hon. gentleman anticipates and dreads will take place, that the legislature will actually be guilty of fraud—I will go as far as fraud—in order to secure power and injure this Parliament, Parliament has always in its own hands the power to meet fraud by counter legislation. It is because we believe and suppose that the local legislatures will act as they have been acting, in the best interests of their own constituents, that we are acting in this way. In 1885 the legislature of the province of Que-