

that it may be fully considered by the House, after its attention has been thus called to it, I suggest that the debate be adjourned. I must say I do not see my way clear to accept the Bill, but I do not desire the House to pronounce on it now, because hon. members may desire to have a debate on the proposed measure at a future day.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. I think the hon. Minister is not quite fair to the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Amyot), in declaring this Bill invited any man to commit a fraud. That is a harsh construction to place on the provision which enables a man who does not like either candidate, to spoil a ballot, and I hardly think it was warranted either by the terms of the Bill or the speech of my hon. friend. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the Minister of Justice is perfectly right in saying that a departure of this importance ought to be very carefully considered by the House. I am bound to say, however, that my experience, extending over a very considerable number of years, leads me to believe that there are no sources of corruption in elections at present greater than those which are inflicted upon candidates by the temptation to bring persons from a distance to vote in any constituency. I know at the present moment enormous frauds and enormous corruption exists, and has existed for a number of years past in connection with the bringing of electors from distances, and more particularly in bringing them from the adjacent States, were, unfortunately, a very large number of persons qualified to vote at our elections are to be found. Then there is another evil that has been growing and increasing all the time, that is, the evil of personation, of bringing persons forward to represent men who have been for a considerable time absent from the particular constituency. Both these evils will be very largely removed by the adoption of the principles of one man one vote, and that party resident in the constituency in which he gives his vote. However, with respect to the question of compulsory voting, I think there is a great deal to be said for the principle, although I am at one with the Minister of Justice in the opinion that the penalties proposed in this Bill are decidedly too severe. I do not think it is an offence, if we create it an offence, which should be subject to imprisonment or fine, because an elector does not choose to exercise his privilege of franchise. But I do think this: If a man does not choose to exercise his franchise without having good and valid reasons for neglecting that duty, for it is a duty and not a mere right, I think it would be a good thing if some penalty were inflicted on him, and if a man without sufficient valid cause or excuse neglected to exercise his franchise, it would be a very fair thing indeed to disqualify him for a term of years, five years or even more, from exercising the franchise, and that the returning officer, on proof being given that, without just cause, an elector had neglected to exercise his franchise, might very fairly strike his name off the list of voters. I therefore think that the principle of the hon. gentleman's Bill is one that well deserves consideration, although I cannot say that I myself, any more than the Minister of Justice, can see my way to agree with its details. However, I am glad that the Minister of Justice has proposed an adjournment of the debate, and I hope various members of the House will express their opinions on this

subject. I believe if steps were taken to make voting compulsory in some degree, they would tend very largely to reduce the expenses of elections all over this country, and that is very desirable indeed, and they would tend largely to put down corruption, which, as our election courts show, has existed to a very considerable extent in the conduct of our elections.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). I think the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Amyot) has rendered an important service in bringing this question before the House for consideration. It has for some time been a subject of discussion in the country, and it is just as well that it should be carefully considered in Parliament. Of course, the Minister of Justice is quite correct in saying that this measure is far more radical in character than the others we have been considering this afternoon. It will necessitate a very material change in Parliament, and in the existing law, in order to give effect to this measure. The rule referred to by the hon. member for South Oxford (Sir Richard Cartwright), of one man one vote, and the exclusion of non-residents in a constituency from voting within that constituency, would be a necessary part of a measure of this kind; because you can scarcely enforce a law of this kind against non-resident voters, and especially where these non-resident voters are no longer dwelling within the limits of the Dominion. I must say that, so far as my own individual opinions are concerned, it always seemed to me that although a measure of this sort would remedy many existing evils, yet there were many serious objections to it; objections which, in my judgment, counterbalanced any advantages which would be derived from it. I do not go into a discussion of the objections to the details of the Bill referred to by the Minister of Justice, but I thought some of these objections were scarcely fair and did not properly apply to this measure any more than to the existing law. Certainly, if the elector comes to the poll the object of this measure is entirely met: it is not necessary that he should even vote. At the present time the elector comes to the polls, tenders his vote, and if some scrutineer present asks that he should be sworn, and he refuses to take the oath he cannot vote. Surely the Minister of Justice would not press his criticism so far as to say that the person who comes to the poll should be compelled to take the oath in order that his vote might be recorded, whether he was willing to take it or not. That is not the intention of the Bill; the intention is that the voter shall come to the poll without being induced to come by any improper or corrupt consideration, and if the law requires him to be present at the polling division in which it is necessary that his vote should be recorded, if recorded at all, the object of the Bill is in that respect entirely accomplished, whether he spoils his ballot or refuses to take the oath, or records his vote for one or the other candidate. But, Sir, under our system of parliamentary government one of the things that happens at an election is, that sometimes there is a very great deal of indifference exhibited by the electors owing to the fact that no important issue interesting to the public at large has been presented in the elections. Sometimes that indifference is confined to a particular party, because the members of that party are not altogether satisfied with the policy