

something very nearly akin to it, because I find that section 8 reads as follows:—

Where under the laws of a province the voters' lists for any provincial electoral district or division are prepared not at regular intervals, but at such times as are fixed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, or some other provincial or local authority, or only from time to time for the purpose of a general or other election in immediate contemplation, the last preceding voters' lists so prepared shall be used for the purpose of any Dominion election in the territory comprised in such provincial electoral district or division, or any part thereof, if such lists have been prepared not more than one year before the date of the writ for such Dominion election; otherwise, new voters' lists shall be prepared, and for the purpose of preparing and giving effect to such voters' lists the Governor in Council may appoint all necessary officers and confer upon them all necessary powers, and in the preparation and revision, and bringing into force of such new voters' lists the provisions of the laws of the province regulating the preparation and revision and bringing into force of the provincial voters' lists in such cases shall, as far as possible, be observed and followed.

It is here laid down, that, when the voters' lists for the provinces are more than a year old, the provinces will be compelled to make up new lists. This Bill imposes on the provinces new labour, and I do not see why, in order to have uniformity, we should not impose on them the further task of having the lists for the provincial legislatures and for the House of Commons prepared at the same time. If that will not prove sufficient, I would commend to the hon. Solicitor General the advisability of having both the provincial and Dominion lists prepared by joint officers appointed by the Dominion and local governments. This would, to some extent, relieve the great trouble and expense to the electors in attending to more than one revision. Those revisions could be proceeded with simultaneously, and if this would require more machinery, it would, as regards general utility and practical purposes, remove the defects of this Bill and a great deal of the labour and expenditure imposed on candidates both for the local legislatures and the Dominion Parliament. In that case the expense could be evenly borne by the provinces and the Dominion share and share alike.

I do not intend to proceed at any great length in further discussing this Bill. The great objection to it is, that it is not such a measure as the constitution of this country requires. Canada, we are told, has lately become a nation. I do not know what has made Canada a nation, but I am sure that the introduction of this mongrel franchise is not one of those things which would entitle Canada to be called a nation. I might proceed and discuss some of the other clauses, but, as they will come up again in committee, I shall wait until that stage is reached. The objections to the Bill are, in my opinion, insuperable; and, until they are eliminated, I cannot support it.

Mr. MARTIN.

Mr. BRITTON. It must be admitted that the opposition to this Bill is reduced to a minimum, when it is conceded that the present franchise law must be repealed. With the exception of the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Clancy) and the hon. member for Queen's, P.E.I. (Mr. Martin), no one has a good word to say for the old Act, but every one seems willing it should be killed and buried, and not a few are ready to throw a stone at its grave. The hon. member from Bothwell said that there were no petitions against the present law, and no outcry for its repeal. Surely, the hon. gentleman could not have attended the political meetings in the last election campaigns, or he would have heard considerable outcry against it, unless there is very different talk at the meetings in the west, compared to what is heard in the east. The outcry on the part of the Liberals in the west against this law was certainly not dissented from in any way by Conservatives. The latter were as vigorous in their promises to vote for its repeal as was the hon. member who spoke before recess, and on all hands there was unanimity of opinion condemning it. That being the case, and the press of the country also being outspoken, I should not think there was any necessity for any petition to inform this House of the general feeling in the country against the present law. I do not, for a moment, accuse the revising officers under that Act of being dishonest, or of any intention to be unfair. Many of them were county judges, against whom I have not a word to say; and those who were not, were, in many cases, men who intended to be fair to both parties. But the fact remains that these lists were stuffed, and stuffed in a way most unfair to the Liberals. They had in them the names of men who had been dead, in some cases to my knowledge, twenty years, and also the names of men who had ceased to own property in the polling divisions in which they were electors, for years, and had moved away, thousands of miles, in some cases, from the places where their names were registered. It may not have been a desire to be unfair, but the fact remains that, in some cases, these revising officers put the burden of proof on the persons claiming that names were improperly on the lists. They obliged these persons to prove a negative; they obliged them to prove that a person whose name was on the list was not possessed of property sufficient to qualify him; and in many cases the parties appealing abandoned their appeal rather than be put to the expense and trouble of proving a negative. In this way these lists became discredited all through the country, and the time has not come too soon for the repeal of the law. The few words we have heard in this House, this afternoon and evening, in favour of the present law, only amount to damning it with faint praise. If it is conceded that the law should be repealed, the