

to adopt the provision of this Bill. I move the second reading of this Bill, hoping that my motion will be carried and that the Minister of Justice will consent that the Bill be referred to a special committee to see if there is anything in its provisions which would be advantageous or useful to the country.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. I am very sorry that I cannot acquiesce in the opinion so politely expressed by the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) when he invited me to concur with him in making this Bill law. I think its adoption would introduce very serious confusion into the franchise law of this country and I am inclined to believe from the observations which the hon. gentleman himself made at the close of his remarks that he has hardly himself realized the confusion that would result. If the qualifications of voters for local elections and for Dominion elections were the same, and it were a mere question of the remoteness of the revision it would be a matter of no concern which list was taken and it would be most desirable to have the most recent one, but we cannot forget that the franchises are materially different in some of the provinces; indeed in some of them widely different.

Mr. CHARLTON. They are different under the Dominion list also.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. Now, it is absolutely necessary that we should have certainty, whatever inconvenience or delays there may be, as to what the franchise is, and as to the persons who should exercise that franchise. But under this Bill, in certain circumstances one set of persons might be qualified to vote for a member of Parliament, and a few days later an entirely different set, and only that set, would have the right to vote. I suppose the case which the hon. gentleman probably had in his mind, and in which the inconvenience would be somewhat less, is the case of a suspension of the Franchise Act for a year. I infer that from the hon. gentleman's closing remark that the operation of a Bill like this would have the effect of compelling the Government to prompt revisions—I suppose he meant regular revisions without suspensions. If that is his object, the Bill would come up more appropriately as a clause in a Bill providing for the suspension of the Franchise Act, because I need not inform him that without a special Act the revision must go on. But what I wish particularly to call the attention of the hon. gentleman and the House to is the unforeseen inconvenience—for I think the hon. gentleman has hardly foreseen it—which would result, even with prompt and regular revisions of the lists, from the passage of this Bill. Let the present law be carried out regularly and fairly, and the lists completed by the 1st of November every year, as I suppose they could be. In all conscience those lists ought to be good for twelve months. But a vacancy occurs in the following June, before the time for revising the lists again comes around. In the month of May, the local revision has taken place; so that in the month of June, were the hon. gentleman's Bill in force, we should find that all the electors who were qualified in November would be disqualified in June, and the lists made in the month of May would come into force instead. Not only would that inconvenience be open to occur in any province in

which there would be a different date for revision from the date for the revision of the Dominion lists, but in point of fact there would be different dates in the different provinces, because I venture to say that the revision is completed at a different date in every province in Canada. So that, if we adopt this amendment we shall never know, when a bye-election is likely to occur in a province, under what list or what electoral qualification the election is to be carried on. I think the hon. gentleman will see that it would lead to an enormous amount of uncertainty, an uncertainty multiplied by the number of provinces in Canada; and I therefore feel compelled, notwithstanding the hon. gentleman's courtesy in recommending this Bill to my consideration, which I duly appreciate and very often comply with, to move that it be not now read the second time, but that it be read the second time this day three months.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) With most of the observations made by the hon. Minister of Justice, I must say I concur. I think my hon. friend, whose motives I have no doubt were the best, had not fully considered the difficulties and inconveniences that would arise necessarily from the passage of his Bill. It is absolutely essential, in matters of this kind, that there should be certainty—that the candidate on the one hand and the electorate on the other should know on what lists the election would be conducted; but the Bill of my hon. friend, so far from introducing certainty, would introduce an amount of uncertainty which would be very trying. As between the Dominion franchise and the provincial franchises I have never scrupled to declare my preference for the provincial, but this is not the question now before us. The fact that the provincial lists are not coterminous with the Dominion electoral districts would involve a difficulty which could not be overcome. I hope my hon. friend will not press the Bill to a division, as I certainly cannot concur in it, and would be obliged to vote against it.

Mr. WALLACE. Another difficulty would arise in this way: The provincial lists are prepared by the various municipalities. In case there are no appeals to the county judge, the lists are certified by him at least as early as October in each year, while if there are any appeals, the hearing of them is fixed for some time ahead, and the lists are not completed until a later period, perhaps not till January. The result might be that in the same district you would have to use the Dominion list in one municipality and the provincial list in another. For this reason I think the Bill should not become law.

Mr. SPROULE. I think all amendments should be designed to make the law as simple as possible; but if this Bill were carried, it would only cause the worst kind of confusion. Suppose a voter came up to a polling booth, and you wanted to swear him, which oath would you put, the Dominion or the provincial? Then, the Dominion law provides that one man may vote in different ridings, while the provincial law provides for one man one vote. In other respects the rules of voting in the two cases are different. So that the only result of passing this Bill would be to introduce confusion, and perhaps a violation of the law, though unintentionally, by returning officers and voters.