

cause it is right and proper that the responsibility should rest upon some shoulders for this appointment, the Government is determined to accept that responsibility. They have determined to accept it because no better system, no fairer system, has yet been devised, and until a better system is devised the Government will appoint returning officers under the provisions of this Bill.

There are a great many details in the Bill, Mr. Speaker, which I shall not now make an attempt to cover; indeed, I should not touch upon details on the motion for second reading. I have already spoken at far too great length, but possibly it will be found that the time I have taken up this afternoon will not have been wasted; that in the end it may prove to have effected a certain amount of economy in the further discussion of the Bill. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING: (leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, may I immediately congratulate my hon. friend (Hon. Mr. Guthrie) upon the exceptionally clear, lucid and comprehensive statement which he has just given to the House? His concluding remarks to the effect that the length of time he had taken in delivering his address would in the end possibly prove of advantage to the House may, I think, be concurred in. His statement, with one exception, which I shall mention, has been from beginning to end helpful and most illuminating. Particularly do we thank my hon. friend for having at the commencement of this debate gone so fully in historical outline into past legislation pertaining to the franchise and also into the constitutional aspect and the question of the right of this Parliament and the right of the provinces respectively to legislate with regard to this matter.

I am sorry to have to say to my hon. friend that in that part of his argument which had to do with the constitutional aspect, and which constituted the major portion of his address, he was beside the mark in one respect: he led the House to believe that in some way or another I had questioned the right of this Parliament to legislate regarding the franchise. I challenge my hon. friend to point to any remark of mine, in Hansard or elsewhere, which has ever questioned the right of this Parliament to enact a federal franchise law. I am not fortunate in possessing the legal training that my hon. friend has had, but I have some little knowledge of constitutional law and of the constitution of this country, and

I know as well as he does that as between the provinces and the Dominion, where no powers are specified other than those mentioned in Section 92 of the British North America Act as belonging to the provinces, the residue of power rests with the Federal Parliament and that this Parliament has full and complete jurisdiction in the matter of enacting a law pertaining to the federal franchise. As I proceed I shall take occasion to refer to the remarks which I made in the debate on the Address, to which my hon. friend alluded, and to show just what was the purport of the reference which I made to provincial lists on that occasion. Everything I said at that time I am prepared to repeat at this. I made the remark I did then in order that the Government, and my hon. friend in particular, might have it in mind when he should speak on this occasion. He has not, I think, met the point that I then raised, but, as he has said, there will be opportunity throughout the debate to do so, and doubtless he will give his reasons later if he takes exception to it.

But while I congratulate my hon. friend on the lucidity of his exposition, I congratulate him still more upon the spirit in which the Government, according to his statement, is prepared to meet Parliament with respect to the legislation which they are bringing down. He has made it clear that so far as the Bill before the House at the moment is concerned, the Government do not propose to view its provisions as being like the laws of the Medes and Persians; that, on the other hand, the Government will be ready to accept any suggestion that appeals to the wisdom of the House; ready to accept any amendment which may tend to make this Act in the nature of a model and a guide for all future laws dealing with the question of the franchise. Well, I am happy to assure my hon. friend and the Government that we are only too ready to meet them in that spirit. We have no desire to make of this measure a political football, a matter of party gain or loss one way or the other.

Mr. Speaker, the measure now before us is not only the most important measure which will come before Parliament this session; it is one of the most important measures that can come before Parliament at any time. The considerations which we have to take into account in discussing this measure are much larger than those of the fortunes of any member of the House, or of any party in the House, or of any Government. We have been passing through