

this time, hoping that some member of the Government or some of their supporters would put before us some good reason why this most objectionable Bill should be forced through the House this Session. But up to this moment I have not heard one reason which may be considered a valid one for this objectionable legislation. There have been no complaints, so far as I know, from any of the Provinces, against the existing franchises. For nearly eighteen years the several Provinces of the Dominion have been working under their own laws, to elect members to represent them in this House, and I have yet to hear the first word of complaint against that system. There can be no reason given for this change, that I know of, except that the Government may hope that by it they will get a more intelligent set of members returned to this House. If that is their expectation, it is a slur upon every gentleman who sits in this House at the present time. Do they expect to get a more intelligent vote? I do not think they will, under this Bill. The Bill, apparently, has been framed to suit one particular Province. Instead of enlarging the franchise, it restricts it many of the Provinces of the Dominion. Some gentlemen have asserted that this Bill could do no harm, because it enlarged the franchise, and gave votes to some persons who are now denied the privilege. I fail to see it in that light. In the Province of Nova Scotia we have a simple franchise which is easily understood; \$150 worth of real estate or \$300 of personal property, or \$300 of real estate and personal property combined, entitles a man to vote; and that is the franchise of Nova Scotia, as it stands at present. Now, this Bill, if it is carried through the House, will deprive a considerable number of persons in Nova Scotia, who have heretofore voted, of the right to vote for members of this House. The measure is largely based upon the principle of the ownership of real estate. It is not intended to give any man a vote who possesses personal property only, no matter how much it may amount to. In the Province of New Brunswick, as my hon. friend from Queen's (Mr. King) has shown, it will deprive a large number of electors of the right to vote for representatives in this Parliament; in the Province of Prince Edward Island we know it is calculated largely to limit the franchise that now exists; in the Province of Manitoba, as we have just heard from one of the representatives of that Province, it will largely restrict the franchise; and in the Province of Ontario it will have a like effect; so that I do not understand how the Bill can be received with favor by any gentleman in this House, no matter from what Province he comes. It is all very well to say that the object of the Bill is to create a uniform franchise that will be suited to the whole Dominion, and one that will give the electors of all the Provinces a right to vote under a similar franchise. But I do not see that that will be the effect of the Bill if it becomes law. In fact, the right hon. First Minister, when he introduced it, rather intimated that it would be necessary for him to depart from the uniform principle, to a certain extent; and the very moment he departs from that principle with respect to any one of the Provinces, he destroys the whole principle of the Bill. I can easily understand any gentlemen who is favorable to a legislative rather than to a federal union being favorable to a Bill of this kind; but I cannot see how anybody who is disposed to favor the federal principle could for one moment favor this Bill. If it is the intention to continue to carry out the provisions of the British North America Act, which provides that every Province of the Dominion shall send a certain number of members here to represent it in the Federal House, it seems to me that it is only fair and only common sense to allow the Local Legislatures of the Provinces to fix the franchise under which they will elect representatives to this House. The hon. member for Cardwell (Mr. White) referred to a law which was passed by the Nova Scotia Legislature in 1871, whereby certain officials were disfranchised. I think his allusion to, and explanation of, that law was very unfair. I happened to be a member of the Government of Nova Scotia

at the time that Bill was passed, and its object was to protect a certain number of officials of the Dominion Government who were favorable to the Local Government of that day. A great many of those men were pressed by the friends of the Dominion Government to go to the polls and vote against the Local Government, which they were not desirous of doing, and if anything could be done by way of legislation to relieve them, they considered that it would be a great advantage, in fact, a God-send to them. We know that at that time the people of Nova Scotia were in a very excited state. We know that the Dominion Government were using every possible means to defeat the Local Government of the day. We know that it was a very common thing for the Dominion officials in the Custom houses, in the post offices, and on the railways of that Province, to go out at any time that the election of a member for the Local House was in progress, and to do their utmost to defeat the Government candidate. Taking all these things into consideration, we decided to pass a Bill disfranchising a certain number of the Dominion and local officials, we did not confine it to the Dominion officials. We included in that disfranchisement the persons employed in the Crown Land Department and the Public Works Department, both local Departments, so that we disfranchised a number of our own men as well as a number of Dominion officials; and I have yet to learn that that was not a very proper Act. This Act went only a little farther than old Canada in disfranchising. I will just run over, for the information of the House, a few of those who were disfranchised under the old Canada Act:

"Judges, commissioners of bankrupts, recorders of cities, all officers of Customs, clerks of the peace, registrars, sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, deputy clerks of the Crown, and all agents for the sale of Crown lands, all officers engaged in the collection of any duties payable to Her Majesty in the name of duties or excise, shall be disqualified."

The hon. the Minister of Customs stated, I think, that postmasters were also disqualified. We went a little farther and disfranchised those employed in the several Departments; we did not say they should not vote for members of the Dominion House, but merely stated that they should not vote for members of the Local House, and a Bill was passed in this House afterwards giving them the right to vote for members of this Parliament. For fear that anybody should be disqualified who ought to have a vote, if he left the employ of the Government, we next year passed a law to which the hon. member for Cardwell (Mr. White) referred, but out of which that hon. gentleman did, as he always does, when he undertakes to quote, leave a portion of it, which explains that we passed that Act to authorise those to vote who had not been in the employ of the Dominion Government for a specified time before the elections took place. This is what the hon. member for Cardwell said:

"The hon. gentleman asked if any evil had resulted. All I know is this: We have had indications of a disposition to cause evil. I have here two statutes passed in the Province of Nova Scotia. I have here a statute passed in 1871, I presume when their own local elections were coming on, in which it declares as follows:—"

Then he read the disfranchising clause:

"It shall not be lawful for any person to vote at an election for a member or members to represent the people in a General Assembly of this Province, who, at any time within fifteen days before the day of election, was in receipt of wages or emolument of any kind as an employee, in the Post Office, the Custom house, the Inland Revenue Department, the lighthouse service, on the Government railways, in the Crown land office, or the local Public Works and Mines."

Then he went on to say:

"That was passed in 1871 by the Local Government. Why? Because they suppose that some of those electors, being officers in some sense, or employees of the Dominion Government, might have influence in Dominion elections, and they passed that law practically to disfranchise them, practically to lessen the power of the Conservative party in that Province. Having accomplished their object by means of that Act, they went to work, when it was their interest, the Liberal party coming in after the election of 1872, and passed an Act to repeal that law, and give all those men votes again."