

operation throughout the nine provinces. There is no diversity practically, and there would be no difficulty now in a uniform system. The danger of confusion has been removed, and that was the great danger that Mr. Blake foresaw. He did not on that occasion direct his argument very strongly towards voters' lists. He had very little to say about them. What he pointed out, and what the Liberal party pointed out in 1885, as any one can see by reading the debates, was that the Conservative Administration of that day was asking the House to adopt a measure which, in the opinion of the Liberal party, was nothing short of a political iniquity on account of the partisanship contained in its sections. The chief fight on behalf of the Liberal party was against the proposal to establish in this country a system of revising barristers, with power both to prepare and to revise the lists, and without any provision in the Bill for the right of appeal from the revising barrister. Every Liberal in the House pointed out the iniquity of such a proposal as that, and after a long and hard fight modifications were made, and the right of appeal was granted. That removed some of the difficulties, but as a matter of fact the question of provincial voters' lists per se hardly arose during the debate. The fight was on the method which the Bill proposed under which voters' lists should be prepared and revised by men who might be absolutely partisan, creatures of the Government of the day, with no right of appeal being given against them. Subsequently that proposal was very much modified, and the Bill passed the House. It was a most interesting debate, and I would commend it to the attention of every man in this House even at this late day. It was a fine argument and a rare fight. But I must confess that one cannot read these old pages of Hansard without some tinge of regret, some tinge even of sorrow. When you see in the list of those who participated in that debate the names of Macdonald, Laurier, Blake, Langevin, Mackenzie, Chapleau, Davies, Cartwright, Edgar, Weldon, White and Foster, one recalls with a feeling of sorrow that all the great parliamentarians of that day have passed to another sphere save two, one of whom now occupies the highest judicial position in this country, the other being my right hon. friend the Acting Prime Minister of this country (Sir George Foster). I am sure it is a matter of the greatest gratification and pride to us all to find him here

at this distance of time, after a career of well nigh forty years in this Parliament, and over half that time, I believe, as a member of the Government. We have him with us to-day, rich in vigour of body and mind, his intellect, not dulled, but rather sharpened by the passage of years, his temper, I think, on the whole improved, his vision increased, and his parliamentary experience far above that of any other member of this House. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, I voice the unanimous wish of all the members of this House when I say that we hope he will be able for many, many years to say to himself,

For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

The Act of 1885 went into operation despite the protests of the Liberal party, and it continued to be the law of this country for the next thirteen years. Speaking as one who had some actual experience under the operation of that Act, I did not like it. It was burdensome, troublesome, costly, and above all, dilatory. No one, I think, realized these features of that legislation more keenly than the Conservative party who passed it. The Act, before it was repealed, had not a friend in the country. Everybody wanted it changed. What I personally most complained of in regard to that law was that it was so dilatory that we never had an up-to-date voters' list during its whole operation. In the general election of 1891 we had to vote upon lists certified three years before election day.

In the election of 1896 the lists were over two years old. The thing was so expensive that you could not ask to have the list revised every year; the treasury would not stand it. I think the late Sir John Thompson realized the difficulty in 1894 when he was Prime Minister, for in that year he introduced a new Bill into the House. It only got to the second reading, having never passed the House. But in introducing the Bill Sir John Thompson was pretty guarded in his language. If I may be permitted to quote from his speech, he said:

The number of differences which existed between the provincial franchises and the Dominion franchise as established by our own Act are so few as not to be worth the contest and expense which are involved in keeping them up, and the adoption of a general system which will apply to the local and Dominion legislatures has recommendations as regards simplicity and facilities for economy which cannot exist under a dual system which we have been keeping up for the past few years.

Later on in the same speech he said:

The great principle which underlay the Franchise Act of 1885 was controlled by this