

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. Enquire of the present Minister of the Interior.

Mr. FOSTER. If you do not know who signed it, you probably know who would like to.

Mr. CAMERON (Huron). You know all about it.

Mr. FOSTER. It is generally the case that the bravest men do the signing; while the less brave stand behind and pull the wires. I leave it to the hon. gentleman to say to which category he belongs. He has been very anxious to know why we have not been saying anything in this debate. He has been puzzled and annoyed because we did not discuss this question. I suppose the reason is, that we knew what we thought was sufficient to guide us in our voting. We have studied the Bill, we knew it was useless to let light in upon the other side of the House, and we were willing to sit here and see if we could be convinced by their arguments. We have listened to them, and I fail to see any who show any great signs of being convinced. For myself, I desire to say that I shall discuss questions in this House when I think it is my duty to do so, and that neither taunts nor requests, nor anything of the kind, coming from any gentleman in this House, will make me speak, unless I consider that there is something to be gained by my speaking. But they are not satisfied whether we talk or not, and one of the chief grievances of the member for Peel (Mr. Fleming) was that some gentlemen actually brought pillows into the House. Peel and pillows seem to go closely together. They say: Why are we obstructing this Bill? Because you brought pillows into the House. That is a good argument. I recommend the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Fleming) to take that argument down to his constituents, to go through the constituency with it next summer, and when he is asked: Why did you keep up the long obstruction? He can reply: they brought in pillows. Pillows in that case were only a sign of something else. Of what? We supposed on this side of the House that we were to have an all-night session. And we were right. I know, and hon. gentlemen know as well as I do, that they were prepared for an all-night session before they saw any pillows, or any sign of pillows on this side of the House. I just wish, for a moment or two, to place my opinion on this Franchise Bill before the House, and the position which it seems to me has been taken by those who have been discussing the Bill. Every man is free to make up his opinion on this or any other measure that comes before the House.

Mr. CASEY. Has he?

Mr. FOSTER. That is, if he has a mind to make up. I was not alluding particularly to my hon. friend from West Elgin (Mr. Casey). If the hon. gentleman objects, I will except him from the category, with pleasure. Every hon. member, I say, has a right to make up his own opinion upon a measure, and he has a right to express that opinion; but at the same time we are human beings, and we have a certain form of government under which we carry on our affairs. That form of government is what is known as responsible government. In 1882 the people came together at the polls, and they elected by an overwhelming majority one party to take charge of the administration of the affairs of this country and take the dominant part in its legislation. And when they elected them, they said this to the members they elected: We will trust you for the next five years; go to the House, conduct its affairs, carry on our legislation, and when the five years are up, come back to us and we will do—what? Hold the minority responsible? Not at all. But we will hold you, the majority, responsible for the manner in which you have administered public affairs. So I say it is the dominant party for the time being possessing the confidence of the people, which is responsible for the

administration of public affairs. Hon. gentlemen may say: They have not the public confidence. But you can go on no other theory than that they have the confidence of the country. It is that dominant party which must take the chief part in legislation and the whole share in moulding the policy of the country. You reverse things entirely when the minority say: No; you do not represent the people; if you do anything we do not like we will stop here till next October in order to prevent your measures going into operation. How? Not by argument or by destructive criticism, but by the simple force of wearing out the majority, if possible, and so preventing legislation. I say that if that is the rule which is to be adopted you may as well throw away responsible government first as last, and do away with all the responsibility of the dominant party, which is supposed to have the confidence of the country. I said we were human beings as well. What do we hear and see, for we cannot keep our ears and eyes shut. We hear on the street and in the corridors the threat made that this Bill shall not pass. We take up the organs of hon. gentlemen opposite and we see the threat repeated, that this Bill shall not pass. In the Ottawa organ and in the Toronto organ of yesterday and to-day it is stated that the members will sit here through the summer rather than allow this Bill to pass. We do not have to go to extra-official sources, for the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) said as much, implicitly, if not explicitly, when, after hours and hours and days and days of what seemed to us obstructive tactics, he flung the words over to this side of the House: Take away, withdraw your Franchise Bill, and we will let the business go on.

Mr. MILLS. I did not say that; the hon. gentleman is mistaken as to what I said.

Mr. FOSTER. What did you say?

Mr. MILLS. The hon. member for Northumberland, I think, mentioned a number of things that might be done in order to facilitate business; and after he had repeated his list, I added: Withdraw the Franchise Bill.

Mr. FOSTER. The hon. gentleman has made his explanation, and I do not think there is a single member in this House who will not say that his explanation carries out what I said.

Mr. WOODWORTH. His statement was this, and I remarked it at the time—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order, order.

Mr. WOODWORTH. I rise to an explanation.

Mr. MILLS. I say that my explanation was precisely what I stated.

Mr. WOODWORTH. I am speaking to a question of Order.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order, order.

Mr. WOODWORTH. There is no member who interrupts the House more than the hon. member for Bothwell. He has interrupted the hon. member for King's with a statement. I say, in the face of this Parliament, that that statement is not correct.

Mr. FOSTER. There is a voice on that side of the House. It makes little difference as to the exact words in which the hon. member made his statement. The meaning of the statement, if it had any meaning, though the most reasonable view might be that it had not, was: Take away your Franchise Bill, and then we will go on with those other matters that the hon. member for Northumberland spoke of. But the hon. member for Guysboro' (Mr. Kirk) followed up that statement, when he said, from his place, not many hours ago, that he would sit here till September or October, I am not certain which, in order that this Bill should not pass.