

Government, in reply to the hon. baronet who leads the Opposition, said :

In so far as Nova Scotia is concerned, his argument did not go very far. Indeed, he refuted his own argument, because he said, at a later period, that the legislature of that province had repealed the obnoxious law.

It is almost impossible for me to believe that the right hon. gentleman was conscious really of what he was saying at that point. The hon. leader of the Opposition had pointed out that, having in view a prospective election, the Nova Scotia legislature passed a certain law for the purpose of controlling the election, and when that election was passed, then they repealed the law. Was not that a proof of the very thing we complain of? And yet the right hon. gentleman replied to that statement in the language I have quoted. It is really almost impossible to believe that he was conscious of the patent fallacy that underlay his argument. The right hon. gentleman went on to say that he admitted there was force in the argument that a legislature can abuse its powers. What, I ask you, would we naturally expect of a man in the position of the First Minister, who admits there is force in the argument that a legislature can abuse its powers? Would we not expect him to find a means to prevent such abuse? But instead he went on to say that he knew very well what a majority could do, and to indicate that some wrong had come from the majority to the Liberal party in this House. I can only say that I have not yet heard any Liberal mention a single case in which any individual can be accused of having done wrong under the existing franchise law.

Just to be a little more explicit, let me point out the peculiar proposition that lies beneath this Bill of my hon. and learned friend, the Solicitor General. The first proposition is this, that in a federation the popular branch of the central Parliament should not control its own electoral franchise. The next is that in a federation, the legislature of each of the provinces of the federation should not only control its own electoral franchise, but within the provincial bounds the electoral franchise of the central Parliament of the federation. You have only to state these propositions to show their utter absurdity. And what is the argument in their support used by the right hon. gentleman? It reads like a piece of fine satire. He says, practically: Here we have two powers in the federation; our powers are divisible, therefore we shall have one franchise. Where is the logic? Let me read the right hon. gentleman's words:

The reason for that is that our system is a system of divided legislative powers.

And because it is a system of divided legislative powers, it should have only one franchise, and it is the lower assemblies which

Mr. DAVIN.

should control, not only their own franchise, but the franchise of this House. What is the object that we should aim at? Is it not that this House, under whatever law we pass, should be a true representation of the opinion in the country? That is what we should aim at, and I was surprised to hear my right hon. friend talk of principles and philosophy in this matter. We sometimes hear his eulogists tell us that he has been a student of Burke and Fox and the other great Liberal statesmen of England. Well, Burke would have come down on him, if he were in this House, pretty strongly for talking about philosophy in such a connection, or even of principle. What we are aiming at here is simply to work out an expedient or a means by which this House shall be a true representation of the opinion of the country.

It seems to me that my hon. and learned friend the Solicitor General, when he introduced this Bill, was guilty of a little want of candour. He told this House that this Bill had a precedent in the one introduced by the late Sir John Thompson in 1894. Could my hon. friend have been candid in making that statement? Why, all that the Bill by Sir John Thompson in 1894 aimed at was to use the provincial franchises as a basis on which to arrive at a Dominion list, but the Dominion lists were not to pass out of the control of the Dominion Parliament.

The essence of this Bill, as shown by the language of my hon. and learned friend and of his right hon. leader (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and by the Bill itself is to transfer the control from this House to the provincial legislatures. The right hon. gentleman, using the word "control" in one sense at one time and in another sense at another time, which is not very creditable to his logic, to say nothing of morality, says that we give control of the franchise to the local legislatures but we do not part with it, but still exercise sovereignty. It is like saying if you give a five pound note or a dollar bill to a man and he takes it away, you still have it, or, to quote an old and vulgar saying, that you can eat your cake and have it too. I wish to call attention to what the hon. Solicitor General said. I was almost pained I must confess to read the language of the hon. gentleman. Speaking of the province of Quebec, he said that he was determined that Quebec should have its local franchise for the Dominion. So far as I am concerned I am quite content to let Quebec have its local franchise for the Dominion. One of the things I would complain about with regard to this Bill is that it would thrust upon the people of Ontario and Manitoba and New Brunswick who may not wish it, manhood suffrage for the elections of this House. Sir, is there any cogent argument in stating that there should be the same franchise for this House as for the legislature? Have we not to exercise higher powers which the local leg-