

Ontario Workman.

THE EQUALIZATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY IN THE SOCIAL SCALE SHOULD BE THE TRUE AIM OF CIVILIZATION.

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THE BALLOT.

On the motion for resuming the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Mr. Tremblay, that the bill intituled an Act to provide for the taking of the polls by ballot at the election of members to serve in the House of Commons of Canada be now read a second time.

Mr. Palmer thought any such measure should be uniform for the whole Dominion. He thought the ballot would tend to get rid of improper influences at elections. He suggested, however, that no action should be taken in the direction of the ballot in Canada until it had been tried in England at the general election shortly to ensue there. The matter ought to receive every possible consideration, so that if it were to become law it might be made as perfect as possible.

Mr. Oliver saw no reason why we should wait for the result of the ballot in England, for it had already been tried in Nova Scotia, and in many cities in connection with municipal affairs, and everywhere it had worked well. He referred to the many important public works which were and would shortly be in progress, which would place so many voters under the control of the Government, both Dominion and Local, and thought it would be necessary for the protection of those voters that the ballot should be adopted. The principle of the ballot was also necessary, in view of the great expenditure which was now necessary to enable candidates to carry on elections. The ballot was also necessary to remove all improper influence that might be exercised over clerks and other employes in mercantile establishments by their employers. Among the influences that might be removed by the adoption of the ballot, was that often exercised by influential mercantile men over business men indebted to them, and also all personal influence.

Mr. White, of Hastings, advocated open voting, and did not think voters were afraid of giving their votes fairly and openly; nor did he think improper influence was exercised by employers. He believed the working of the ballot in Nova Scotia had been altogether unsatisfactory. The ballot would not prevent improper influence, and referring to the working of the principle in the States said it had only aided in keeping the very worst class of men in office. His constituents did not want the ballot, and although the then leader of the Ontario Government and his Government used every influence they could bring to bear against him, he had been returned. The Dominion Government had also worked against him and the Grand Trunk had also used their influence against him, and yet he had been returned. The country had a good Government at present (cheers), and had got that Government without the ballot. There had been an immense number of voting places at the recent election and no one had been hurt or ill used without the ballot, while in New York the very reverse had been the case.

Mr. Blake—What about Quebec?
Mr. White—That was only a single case. At all events, nothing should be done till the experiment had been tried in England.

Mr. Burpee, of St. John, said that having seen the working of the ballot in New Brunswick for many years, he must say that it had worked excellently. He advocated its adoption on behalf of the workmen and of young men in mercantile establishments. He himself admired open voting, but the ballot in practice removed many improper influences, and also brought about much more quiet elections. He hoped it would be adopted.

Mr. Edgar said he had presented a largely signed petition from his constituency in favor of the ballot, and he thought it ought to be adopted without waiting for any further experience from other countries. He thought the matter should be dealt with now that members were fresh from the experience, in many cases dear bought and costly, of the recent elections. The ballot would enable voters to vote according to their convictions, and would be a great

protection to the poor, humble, timid and dependent men of the country. It would do away entirely with the very worst features of corruption, direct bribery, and buying of votes. He admitted that he felt some prejudice against secret voting, but its advantages had proved to be so great that he could not but support the measure, and if it were adopted, the session would not have passed in vain.

Mr. Wallace, of Norfolk, opposed the principle of the ballot. The franchise was the right of the voter, and he held that every man had a right to know how his neighbor voted, so that he might approve or condemn. He would make voting compulsory, for it was a duty a man owed his country. The ballot would not do away with bribery; this was proved by the occurrences in the neighboring Union. He was credibly informed that there were men there who contracted to furnish so many votes for so much. As to what had been said respecting the Toronto election, no stronger argument could be urged against the ballot, for open voting there had prevented men from voting for a man for whom they were afraid to be known to have voted. He believed the ballot would tend to dishonor, not to honor; to degrade, not to elevate the voter.

Mr. Cunningham, of Marquette, was strongly opposed to the ballot, as he did not think it would tend to cure any of the evils complained of. He did not think that the reasons for the adoption of the ballot in England existed in Canada. There the landholder exercised great influence over his tenants, but the Canadian farmer was in a very different position, and if there was a man in the world who could give a free and independent vote it was the Canadian farmer, and he did not believe he required any protection. As to the working class he believed them to be as independent a class as could be found anywhere, and he believed that labor was so scarce that the employed had more influence over the employer than the employer had over the employed. He did not believe in the existence of intimidation in the country as was alleged. Bribery, however, did exist to a shameful extent and ought to be put down, but the ballot would not have that effect. The briber, as well as the bribed, ought to be punished, and he would make bribery a misdemeanor, in the case of the man who gave the bribe as well as he who received it. He thought the matter should rest for some time to come until the principle had had a fair trial in England, though he did not believe it would have the good result expected, for the ballot would never cure bribery. It seemed to be expected that the ballot would bring about a political millennium. No one was to express his views, but every one was to speak out and sneak home again. He believed political feeling would be just as great with the ballot as without it, and he should oppose it.

Mr. Daly thought that with the experience of England there was every reason to adopt the ballot in Canada, and at all events he thought it should have a trial. He did not believe it would prevent the necessity of spending money, and no doubt the member for Monck spoke feelingly when he said an election cost a large sum of money. (Laughter.) He thought the ballot would be a great protection to many voters who now refrained from voting from fear of intimidation. In voting for the bill he voted for the principle not the details.

Mr. Chisholm said: In rising to support the resolution before the House he was glad to be in a position to say that he was not a recent convert to the system of vote by ballot, but for years he had been firmly of opinion that this system was the only one by which the voice of the people could be directly obtained in our parliamentary elections; and in accordance with that view he had voluntarily advocated vote by ballot in the recent political contest in his own constituency. He took it for granted that, however widely we might differ with regard to the best mode of getting a fair and honest expression of the people as to the choice of their representative, no mem-

ber of the House would deny that the great object to be attained with regard to our elections was to get an honest return of the men whom a majority of the people really desired to represent them. It would be admitted on all hands that some change is needed; we need some system, new to us at least in the old Province of Canada, whereby the bribery and intimidation that have unfortunately prevailed to a large extent might be, if not altogether stopped, at least seriously checked and greatly diminished. It must be admitted, too, that our present mode of voting is a defective one. It must be admitted by all persons at all given to observation, that bribery, if not intimidation, is largely on the increase in this country, and it is a fact (and one blushes to own it) that there are many men who are in circumstances not to need it, and who occupy respectable positions that ought to place them above it; who do not scruple to sell their votes for a few dollars. And Mr. Speaker, what was the worst feature in the case, public opinion is growing to be such, that men of this class could openly boast of these things and yet no lasting disgrace seemed to attach to them. He did not wish it to be understood that he was charging one party more than another with these things; both parties were culpable, and this being so, there was stronger reason why we should lay aside party feeling in this House, in this particular matter at least, and unite to devise some system whereby this evil may be remedied and the disastrous results which must of necessity flow from a continuation of these practices may be avoided. Although a zealous advocate of vote by ballot, he did not pretend to claim for it that it would entirely remedy the evils of which we complain, yet he would say that it would greatly tend to lessen them, and in this as in all other evils a partial remedy was better than no remedy at all. He thought that vote by ballot must of necessity put an end to anything like intimidation, for he could not imagine a proper system of ballot where intimidation could possibly be exercised; and this to the poor man especially must be a great boon. It had been contended that secret voting is unmanly, and opposed to the idea of outspoken British sentiment; but to his mind that was the true British practice which would place a man in a position to vote in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience without being influenced by the fear of man. Thanks to the great prosperity of our country and the great demand for labor, intimidation is not carried on to the same extent as formerly, yet he had known instances in the last and former elections in his own constituency where men were compelled to vote against their honest convictions or lose their situations. Then if for no other reason let us adopt the ballot to protect the poor man in the time when labor is scarce; his wife and children are dearer to him than his vote, and it was too much to expect from a poor man that he would allow his children to go hungry to bed rather than vote against the man whom he would prefer; the poor had hardships enough to encounter through life without having their consciences placed in the power of merciless employers who would sacrifice them to their own political and selfish ends. While there is not the slightest doubt that vote by ballot greatly diminishes intimidation, drinking and confusion at elections, it seemed to him almost inevitable that vote by ballot must greatly diminish bribery, because of the great uncertainty that there would be in the investment of the money; the only thing that could be relied upon would be a man's honor, and surely after he had accepted a bribe his honor must be held at a very great discount. It was well for the advocates of the ballot in this House that it had been adopted in England, so that we cannot now be met with that powerful argument that it is un-English. It was true that a general election had not occurred since the introduction of the ballot in England, but individual cases had occurred, and so far as he was aware the ballot in

these cases had given great satisfaction. The ballot in England was not obtained until after very many years of persistent advocacy, and it was then only adopted after the most searching and minute investigation by a competent Parliamentary committee into the working of the ballot in other countries. Besides the reports of the Governors of Australian colonies laid before the committee and referred to by his colleague the other night on this debate, he would crave the indulgence of the House while he read some of the evidence taken before the Committee, which to his mind was conclusive in favor of the ballot. [Mr. Chisholm then read the evidence, which went to prove the beneficial working of the system, during its thirteen years' trial in Australia. Our space forbids us to reproduce the evidence.] Mr. Chisholm went on to contend that there was never a time in the history of this country when we required more than we do at the present time a thorough change in our mode of elections, and he held that it was highly essential to the material quietude of the Dominion that we should before another general election shall have taken place have some system for managing the elections very different from the present one. He contended this change should be made during the present session of Parliament, so that the occasional elections that may take place by reason of resignation or otherwise in the interim between now and the termination of this Parliament may be utilized to test the system and suggest such amendments as may be desirable before the next general election. While he was speaking on the subject of elections, he would take the liberty of saying that he was in favor of very many other changes in relation to our elections. Besides being in favor of the ballot, in favor of contested elections being tried by the judges, and the elections being held on one and the same day, he was in favor of the property qualification not being any higher than that of a voter. He thought, too, that if the ballot should be conceded, he would be in favor of abolishing entirely the property qualification of voters. This might seem like going too far, but he was firmly of the opinion that every free man of the full age of twenty-one years should be entitled to cast one vote for one member of this House, provided he had been a resident for some prescribed length of time that might be decided upon. Although not worth one dollar, he would give him this privilege in virtue of his being a British subject. He was opposed to the present mode of nominations; he thought that the proceedings at many of the nominations were a disgrace to the constituencies and to the country generally. He thought, too, that he was opposed to the idea of one man voting in several constituencies by cards; he preferred the idea of every man having one vote, and only one. However, he held himself open to conviction in some of these matters when the proper time should arrive for their discussion. He confessed that the action of the Nova Scotia Legislature, last month, in voting to repeal the Ballot Act in that Province, was on the face of it an argument against the ballot. But a person had only to look at the Ballot Act of that country and it will at once be seen that it is a very imperfect act. And if honorable members would take the trouble to read the Halifax Citizen of the 13th ultimo, and read the report of the debates on the subject they would come to the conclusion that the weight of the argument was largely in favor of the ballot, and they will come to the conclusion too that the members who voted for the repeal of the Act must have been influenced by some other desire than to uphold the purity of elections. It had been stated by some members that the people did not need the ballot or they would have petitioned for it, but he contended that this did not follow; the members of this House were sent here to legislate for the country, and it was presumed that the members knew what their constituents required, and it was too much to expect of the people that for every pub-

lic measure required they should be compelled to carry petitions all over the country and send them to this House before measures of this kind could be passed. He did not claim that the ballot would be a panacea for all the ills of life, but he did claim that it was a good thing, a much needed reform, and therefore he would give it his hearty support.

Mr. Trow said there was a manifest desire throughout the house to adopt the principle, and certainly some change was necessary to prevent the bribery and undue influence now exercised.

Mr. McDonald, of Pictou, would not have spoken but for the many references to the working of the ballot in Nova Scotia. Personally he had always been, and was still, opposed to the introduction of the ballot into our political system. He did not think the arguments adduced to-night were calculated to raise in the opinion of other countries the intelligence or independence of the people of Canada, but to show rather that some change had taken place which rendered them unfit to exercise the franchise in the free and open way in which it had been exercised by our forefathers. He believed no such change had taken place. The strong argument urged was that the ballot would be secret, and would therefore avoid the evils attendant on the present system of open voting, but the result would be continued deception and continued fraud. It was only on behalf of the weak members of society that the ballot was to be adopted, for it had been admitted that the farmers were thoroughly independent, and that skilled artisans were so also. It was only a few weak worthless things to whom the ballot would apply, and not the independent many. The case was very different in England, for there it was admitted that capital had a great influence and control, but it was not urged that this at all existed in Canada. But the ballot would not prevent undue influence, nor would it conduce to quiet elections. That could only be effected by separating the masses of voters as much as possible, and the practice in Nova Scotia of multiplying the voting places had effected quiet, peaceable voting more than anything else. He had heard no means alleged by which the ballot was to prevent bribery, and in Nova Scotia the experience had been that the secret voting gave as great and even greater facilities for bribery than open voting. In the latter system there was the advantage of administering an oath which could not exist under the former. The man who would bribe in open voting would bribe under the secret system, and the man who would accept a bribe under the one would do so in the other case, and the only result would be that the voter would be able to accept two bribes instead of one. The occurrences mentioned in East Toronto he considered the very strongest argument in favor of open voting; for what was charged? Was it bribery? No. Was it intimidation? No. It was simply holding up to the voters the good, loyal reason that if the voters gave their support to the one candidate they would lay themselves open to the charge of voting for a man for whom no loyal man should vote. He did not believe that in Nova Scotia there was one man out of ten who would not prefer open voting to the ballot, and it would therefore be unjust and un-English to deprive that large majority of their right for the benefit of a small weak minority. As to the schoolmasters on whose behalf the adoption of the ballot had been advocated, he would have thought that that class were more likely to lead than to follow opinion. He thought the arguments in favor of the ballot rather sentimental than otherwise, judging from the expressions heard to-night, and he did not think this sufficient to justify the change proposed. In no country where the system had been in force for years had the public morality been raised. This was shown in the States most clearly, and in France also, and indeed in every country where the system had been long in force. At all events they should wait until the

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