

justifies us in continuing the discussion on this Bill. I have petitions in my desk, which I shall present at the proper time, signed numerously by men of both parties, people who believe this is not a necessary measure, who know that they have never asked for it, who believe that our present system works well; and they desire that this Bill may not become law. I believe that every hon. member on this side of the House can say the same, who has received petitions at all; he will find the names of Conservatives amongst the signers. Therefore, I judge that a large portion of the people of this country see no necessity for this measure, and believe it is inimical to their interests. For those reasons I think we are justified in opposing it at every stage.

Mr. GIGAULT. (Translation.) Mr. Chairman, I desire to offer a few remarks in answer to a statement which has been made in this House with regard to Sir George Etienne Cartier. It has been rightly said that that statesman, for whose memory we have a great deal of respect, had admitted the principle of a franchise law, which was presented in this House in 1870. But that statesman, whose energy was well known, would certainly never have consented to withdraw that measure if he had been convinced that it was necessary and indispensable to the proper working of the Government. He showed deference towards the opinion of the representatives, and he acted wisely, because eighteen years have elapsed since the establishment of Confederation, and these eighteen years have proved that no inconveniences and no abuses have resulted from the electoral system which is in force to-day. Besides, Mr. Chairman, if we read the measure which was supported by Sir George Etienne Cartier, we find that it is the condemnation of the Bill which is now before the House. Is it to be supposed that Sir George Etienne Cartier would have abandoned the principle that property ought to be the basis of the qualification of voters? Is it to be supposed that Sir George Etienne Cartier ever intended to drag the women into the electoral contests? Is it to be supposed that he ever intended to introduce into families a new element of discord, by giving the right to vote to the sons of owners who are living under the paternal roof? Is it to be supposed that that man would ever have consented to clothe the revisers with the arbitrary powers which are conferred upon them by the law which is now under our consideration? Is it to be supposed that he would have put the whole electorate of Canada at the mercy of one man? No, Mr. Chairman; I do not believe it, and the measure of 1870 proves that I am right in making this supposition, because that measure did not enfranchise the women nor the sons of farmers living under the paternal roof; it did not give the right of voting to Indians who are not emancipated, to people who are not allowed to manage their own business, and who, under the new law, will be allowed to take part in the most important administration—the administration of public affairs. The motion which was made within a few days by the hon. member for King's, P.E.I. (Mr. Macdonald), fully justifies the position which I have taken with regard to the Franchise Bill. This Bill has hardly been introduced, it has hardly been submitted to the country, and already there has been a clashing of interest and a state of uneasiness and discontent. The motion of the hon. member for King's, P.E.I., who has given his support to the measure which we are now considering, shows that in Prince Edward Island people are not ready to submit, without grumbling, to the measure which the Dominion Parliament wishes to impose on that Province. That motion shows clearly that in a country like ours, which is composed of Provinces which are dissimilar in habits, customs, institutions and nationalities, we should not look for uniformity in legislation, and especially as regards the electoral franchise. Mr. Speaker, when I opposed this measure I did not think that a motion would be made so soon, which would give so much force to the objec-

tions I have made to this Bill. If we desire to see this Confederation remain powerful and solid, we must grant the other Provinces as many powers as it is possible to give them. The Dominion Parliament must only interfere with the legislation which affects each Province when the Provincial Parliament has no right to enact laws which specially concern that Province. Otherwise, if we use all the powers which we have, if we attempt to rule everything, we will bring to life again a state of things which existed before 1867. Before that time, a part of the country tried to rule another section of the country, and to enact laws which were not in harmony with the character of the people for whom they were destined. The result was a state of uneasiness and trouble, which had led us into political anarchy and which rendered government almost impossible. Is it that same state of things which is sought to be revived? Is it intended to do away with this spirit of contentment which exists in Canada since 1867? The moment we wander away from the federal system we are sure to give rise to clashing and discontent, such as have been manifested by the motion of the hon. member for King's, P.E.I. Mr. Chairman, the citizen should be governed for his own benefit, and not for the benefit of his ruler. When we are legislating we must seek to procure advantages or to prevent misfortunes on the community. I wonder what benefit is going to result to the community from the legislation which will probably be adopted by this Parliament. The electors will certainly not reap any benefit from it. On the contrary, in order to carry out this law we will impose on the people a burden of \$100,000 or \$500,000. Such is the great advantage which will result to society from this electoral law. Not satisfied with depriving the people of all control in the preparation of the voters' list, not content with depriving the provincial Legislatures from a power which they have exercised until this day, and which has been recognised as belonging to them, both by the constitution and by the law of 1874, in order to crown this policy, in order to substitute for a system which works well a system which is unknown and which has not been submitted to the crucial test of experience, we are to saddle our population with an additional burdeu of half a million. The United States have maintained the most powerful and the most solid Republic that ever existed in the world; but in order to obtain this result, each State was allowed to govern itself according to its own notions, to pass laws which were in harmony with the character of the inhabitants of each territory. The American public men have understood that the mode of determining the qualification of voters, not only for State elections but also for Congressional elections, ought to be left with the local Government of each State; and it is this policy which has contributed to maintain this harmony which has made the Republic one of the most powerful in the world. A member of this House has pretended that we had no need to consult the constitutions and legislations of other countries, that we have here prominent statesmen, to whom we ought to give our full and entire confidence. Indeed, I admit the ability and knowledge of the leaders of both political parties in this country, but I am not ready to admit that they have, between them, the monopoly of wisdom. In order to guide ourselves in our legislation we would do well to profit by the knowledge and experience which have been acquired in other countries. In France the pernicious influence of that centralisation policy which is sought to be introduced here has been felt. I was recently asking a French Conservative how it was that the policy of the last Government in France, which is so arbitrary, so unjust, so tyrannical, was always approved of by the people at each election. The first cause, he answered is, in the cities, universal suffrage, which gives to a most of persons an electoral right, whose responsibility they do not understand, and which they use to send to Parliament men of