

my hon. friend the member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) if it is not to maintain for each and all of the Provincial Legislatures, the right which they have always enjoyed until now, the right of deciding what will be the qualification of voters at the elections of members of the Dominion Parliament? There is no doubt that under the Act of British North America, this Parliament has the power of adopting a Franchise Bill for the whole Dominion. Nobody denies that right, Mr. Chairman; but what is loudly proclaimed by the amendments now before you, what I have reason to point out, is the inexpediency of such a legislation, of a legislation so unacceptable to the members of this House. Is this a proper time to establish such a measure? Have petitions been presented to the House by the electors of the Dominion of Canada? Are there pressing and important social reasons militating in favor of this legislative innovation? Have petitions been presented to members of Parliament praying that they should, for the future, leave aside the provincial franchise to adopt a uniform qualification for the whole Dominion? No, Mr. Chairman, never has such a petition been made by the electors of any of the Provinces of the Confederation. It is a positive proof *prima facie* that they are satisfied with the present state of things. I will say more, they would see with regret, with indignation even, Parliament forcing upon them this franchise Act, which is so little in harmony with their social status, and with their wants, at least in the Province of Quebec. But if the electors of the Dominion do not desire such a change in their electoral franchise, has the Government any important reason to propose it to Parliament? From what I have heard, up to this day, from the hon. First Minister and his friends who addressed the House in favor of this Bill, I presume that it has been prepared with a view to simplifying the preparation of the voters' lists, of qualifying a greater number of citizens in the Dominion, and of establishing a uniform franchise throughout the country and throughout all the Provinces. I will state, in a moment, Mr. Chairman, what, in my opinion, are the reasons which must have led to the framing of this famous Bill, which is intended to revolutionise a whole system which has been long established, and which has always given full and complete satisfaction. Well, Mr. Chairman, I will venture to tell you that all these reasons are as many pretexts, and that they are merely delusive. In fact, the Franchise Bill, instead of simplifying the preparation of the voters' lists in the Provinces will, on the one hand, render them more difficult, and more costly, and, on the other hand, will make them more inaccurate and more unsatisfactory. I shall not speak at length on the manner in which the voters' lists are prepared in the Province of Quebec. The hon. members who have preceded me in this House have made that point sufficiently clear. I may say, however, that these lists are made from the valuation roll which is in force, and that nobody can have his name put on the voters' list if such a name does not appear on the valuation roll either as owner or tenant. And this valuation is made with such great care that any man in the municipality who has a right to be inscribed as owner or tenant is necessarily inscribed on the valuation roll. Well it is one of the easiest things in the world. It is very simple work for the secretary-treasurer of the municipality to prepare the valuation roll and voters' list. These lists are filed during thirty days in the office of the council and the electors are invited to go and examine them and to make whatever remarks they see fit to make. And when the thirty days are expired the council decides without appeal whether these lists have been well made. The council meets, hears the reasons which are given by all parties and whoever thinks he has been wronged by the omission of his name from the voters' list, or by the insertion of a name which should not be there, is heard before the council. I am convinced that the voters' list in the Pro-

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vince of Quebec are exceedingly well made and do justice to everybody. Well, with the institution of the revising barristers, I am quite sure that these lists will be very badly made, in the first place because these officers have absolute power, and again because they know neither the persons nor the properties, and so a great number of owners and lessees will be omitted from the voters' lists. I may be told they will have a right to appeal, when the revision day will come, but I am convinced that these revising barristers will not be credited with more fairness than they will deserve, and if they have the courage to act unfairly they may not have the courage of altering their judgments. Therefore, I maintain that the first reason which has been given for introducing this Bill, which is to make the preparation of the lists easier, is altogether worthless, and that the system which we have always enjoyed in the Province of Quebec is preferable by far to that which is provided in the present Bill. Now, will this Bill grant the right of franchise to a greater number of persons in the Dominion? I must state here that the First Minister has completely attained his end if Parliament finally, so far abdicates its dignity as to give the right of voting to the thousands of Indians who are wandering over the plains of the North-West, of Manitoba and of British Columbia, and who are giving us so much trouble to-day. But the hon. First Minister is paying us a poor compliment, when he forces upon us through the majority he commands, the introduction in our legislation of an Act so little in harmony with our ideas for the sole purpose of increasing the number of his political supporters. It is unfair that the hon. First Minister should take such unavowable means to increase the number of his political followers whether they are civilised or not, whether they are emancipated or not, or whether or not they are under the guardianship of the Government who have complete control over them. But if I consider the result which will be produced by the passing of this Bill I find that the hon. First Minister completely failed to attain his end. In fact there is a class of citizens, owners and tenants in the Province of Quebec who under the Electoral Act of Quebec have always enjoyed the right to vote and who will be unjustly deprived of that right, if the amendment of my hon. friend, the member for North Norfolk is not accepted. I refer to the owners in the cities whose properties are only valued at \$200. Under the new law, I am convinced that a great number of citizens in the Dominion will lose their franchise because their properties will not be valued at \$300. And I can speak of it with a knowledge of the facts: In the County of Levis, which I have the honor to represent, is found the town of Levis. Well, as a representative of that electoral division, I believe it is my duty to protest against the fact that a great many of my electors will be deprived of their votes, whether these electors vote for me or against me; what I desire is, that justice should be done to them. On the other hand, there are in the Province of Quebec a great many citizens who are separated by marriage contract as to property for their wives; there are a great number of them in my parish, and there is also a considerable number of them in the town of Levis. The Bill now under consideration, will deprive these persons from the right of voting and I say this is an injustice towards them. Perhaps I may be told that there is in the present Bill a clause which provides for that class of electors. Well, I have heard the hon. member for East Quebec (Mr. Laurier) and the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), asking for explanations from the First Minister, and asking him to define in a positive manner whether these husbands would have a right to vote on the property belonging to their wives under the Bill which is submitted to us. I know not for what reason he has not deigned to answer them, but what I do know is that we have had no satisfactory answer on this point. I suppose it was preferred to surround the Bill with a certain obscurity; the law was draughted in obscure