

somewhat exhaustively discussed both in the House of Commons and by the public press of the country, and I certainly do not feel equal to cast any additional light on the point. I purpose confining the few remarks which I shall venture to make to one branch of the subject with which I have some acquaintance—the preparation of the voters' list—with this I have been familiar from its inception till the latter part of 1883. The revising barrister's clauses have been bitterly assailed by opponents of the measure, and warmly supported by the Government and its supporters, so also by the Opposition press and the papers that supported the Government. I have not seen the subject discussed by independent public writers, and I do not recollect a single instance of a lawyer, not a pronounced party man, writing for or against these clauses. Much said on both sides struck me as strongly colored by party prejudice, and not over-conspicuous, in all cases, for an earnest seeking after truth. I wish to point out some defects inherent in the present system of preparing the voters' lists in Ontario, where more attention has been given to legislation on the subject than in any other Province in the Dominion, and although the Hon. Mr. Mowat has labored for years to make it as complete and as perfect as possible, I think it is not what it might be, not what I believe it will become under the proposed change. I think the honorable the Attorney-General for Ontario is entitled to great credit for his able and persistent efforts in this direction, and though not agreeing with him on several public matters I entertain a very warm respect for him. Of his earnestness and ability as a public man there can be no doubt. I venture to say, however, that the system which prevails in Upper Canada, intended for Dominion purposes to be replaced by the provision of this Bill, is defective, and I say this after several years' experience and using my best efforts to secure the proper working of the voter's list law in Ontario. The best that was possible with the machinery has been accomplished, perhaps. Yet I cannot but think that if Mr. Mowat felt he could operate on lines where science was supreme, he would have probably placed on the statute book clauses very similar to

those Revising Barristers' clauses so much objected to. It probably occurred to Mr. Mowat that the work of preparing the voters' list being of merely a ministerial character and not judicial, he could not constitutionally require it to be done by the local judges, they being under the constitution appointed by the general Government for the performance of duties of a judicial character, and there certainly being no undertaking or liability on their part to perform business of a non-judicial character. Or, if he concluded that the judges might possibly make no objection to do the work as commissioners under an act of the Legislature, he may have felt that it would be an unreasonable thing to impose such a large addition to their work without paying them for it by an addition to their salary. But this the province could not constitutionally do. These considerations, especially the latter, may have operated with him, for Mr. Mowat has always been very considerate towards the county judges, and did everything he could to benefit their condition within constitutional limits. These difficulties do not prevail, at all events to the same extent, in legislation by the Dominion; possibly there may be some question about the first, requiring judges to do the non-judicial work. But the first minister has guarded against difficulty in this connection by keeping the office of Revising Barrister distinct. As to the second, providing for payment of the extra work there would be no difficulty, and I fancy few of the judges would hesitate to undertake it if a proper allowance was made. The present system of preparing voters' lists is not a thing in itself, originally a graft upon the municipal assessment law, it so remains, that is, information collected and designed for one purpose is used for another and different one, and the numerous officers engaged in the work are not appointed by or directly amenable to the Province. In Ontario between 1400 and 1500 subordinate officers are so employed—assessors and municipal clerks. It is obvious that with a system requiring so many agents the want of consistency in administration is an evil inseparable from it—the differences introduced by the various degrees of knowledge, prejudice, intelligence, or care of the agents must be infinite, and a