

There ought to be no wrangling. But, much as I hate the old Franchise Act with all its evils, I can see no good reason for falling in love with this substitute which the Government has offered us. The country expected an Act from the Government that would utilize to the utmost extent, or as far as possible, the municipal machinery in the making of a voters' list. There might be grave difficulty in the way of the Government working out such an ideal; but because it is hard for a Government to do the best, is that Government justified in doing its worst? The old Franchise Act had the one virtue of embodying the ideal of national unity in a law which made the basis of the federal franchise the same thing in every province of the Dominion. This Bill discards the one virtue of the old Act and retains all the evils which that law brought into our politics. Our old friend the revising officer will bob up serenely and disport himself in Manitoba; in Montreal a man will vote wherever he has property; in Ontario he will be able to vote only where he sleeps. Now I did not know anything of the qualifications in the maritime provinces until my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule) referred to the franchises in those provinces. But I object to any franchise Act which makes property the qualification in Quebec; manhood suffrage the qualification in Ontario, and manhood and the favour of a partisan revising barrister the qualification in Manitoba. And, in this connection, I think a good point was made by my hon. friend from West Huron (Mr. Cameron) on the first day of the debate and to-night by my hon. friend from West Middlesex (Mr. Calvert) with regard to one man one vote. I favour also the idea so well put by my hon. friend the member for Brockville (Mr. Wood) this afternoon. I think these suggestions are all essentials in the framing of a Franchise Act. Is this Act the Liberal Government's answer to the expectations of the people? Because, if it is, I can tell the Government that the people will be greatly disappointed. I can tell them further, that the independent voters of this country, a force that is rapidly increasing in number, expected something very much better. I hold that the basis of a Dominion Franchise Act should be the same in every province of the Dominion, and for the sake of that principle, I will vote against this Bill, at least in its present form. I admit that the motion of my hon. friend from York (Mr. Foster) is rather an ignoble way of putting this Bill temporarily out of the way. I would sooner have had a resolution squarely assailing the principal features of the Bill; but as I want to see the Bill either amended or killed, I am prepared to use any tools within my reach even if they are not silver-plated. If it were a question between retaining the old Act or adopting this as a substitute, I might hesitate. I suppose that even this proposal is less objectionable

Mr. ROSS ROBERTSON.

than the iniquity which it would displace. Surely this Government is going to offer this Parliament something better than a choice between evils. Surely this Government underrates its own power when it thus confesses its inability to devise some simple easily-worked-out system which will provide an honest voters' list at a small expense in every province of the Dominion. This Bill, to my mind, does not ensure an honest voters' list; it certainly leaves my Conservative friends with a good excuse for saying that the Government, in the preparation of this Act, were thinking more of advantages to its own party than to the general good of the whole country. I hope that this Act will fail in passing, and thus clear the way for legislation that will be just to all, and for ever leave the making of a voters' list above the strife of partisans. I do not know what the constitutional difficulties are, but it seems to me that it ought not to be impossible for Parliament to agree upon some system that would adopt the municipal or provincial lists so far as these lists comply with the Dominion law. This would clear the way for some simple plan by which a non-partisan authority could add to or take from the municipal or provincial qualifications, so as to make a complete list and comply with the law, which should be the same in every province of the Dominion.

Mr. MORRISON. I regret that the hon. gentleman (Mr. Ross Robertson) who has just taken his seat has not given us some slight idea of the reasons for which he hopes that this Bill will be defeated. On the several occasions upon which I have had the pleasure hitherto of hearing that hon. gentleman address the House, he has very succinctly and explicitly stated his grounds for the votes which he gave. On this occasion he has attacked not only the present Bill, but the old Franchise Act, and he has not, in one instance, specified upon what he bases his objections. Now, the hon. gentleman is as well aware as any one in this House, that epigram is not argument. I take it that when the hon. Solicitor General introduced this Bill he did it for the purpose of having a full and intelligent discussion of the measure; and I may say that I coincide with the hon. gentleman in the regret that the Solicitor General in introducing this Bill, did not consider it necessary to dilate a little more upon the principles underlying it. I think if the Solicitor General had taken that trouble a great deal of the discussion which we have heard would have been obviated, because then hon. gentlemen opposite would not have had the slightest pretext for indulging in what they no doubt are pleased to call argument, during the day or two that they have spent in discussing this Bill. I have heard every hon. gentleman opposite who has taken part in this debate, but I have failed to hear any of them give it that intelligent and logical treat-