

Parliament has never conceded the right of the local authorities to say who shall be eligible for election to the Dominion Parliament, and there can be no doubt that it is equally their right to say how members shall be elected to the House of Commons. The system which has been pursued in this respect hitherto, has been exceptional. I do not know of one solitary instance in which a legislative body, possessing a right such as this, has allowed other bodies to exercise it for them for a number of years. It is an anomaly which has been recognized and commented upon by leading men on both sides of politics in this country. There can be no doubt that the privilege exists under the constitution, and the House of Commons simply exercises the privilege now which it should have enjoyed and exercised all along, under the Confederation Act. That it has not been done sooner is due to the fact that the necessity did not arise until late years. The Province of Nova Scotia, with a view to injuring the Government of the day here, disfranchised the employés on the Intercolonial Railway in their Province. Mr. Mowat gerrymandered the Province of Ontario and modified the electoral laws repeatedly and in such a way as to create confusion. Under the laws of the Dominion the qualification for members is uniform through the Dominion, and the same reason exists why the franchise should be uniform. If this law had for its object the perpetration of injustice upon any province—if for example it refused to the people of the Province of Quebec, or New Brunswick, the rights which are accorded to every other province, it should meet with my opposition. Though I represent New Brunswick in this House, my sympathies extend also to the Province of Quebec, and I should vote with the hon. gentlemen who represent that Province here if I could see that the measure in any sense or degree injuriously affected the Province of Quebec. But the franchise proposed by this Bill disturbs least of all the system which prevails in that Province and can have no injurious effect upon its people. There is less change in the Province of Quebec than in any other part of the Dominion and there is less reason there to feel any alarm because of this measure. To my mind this Bill, instead of injuring,

will prove a decided benefit to the Province of Quebec. We have the Bill condemned on the one side because it is too liberal, while on the other it is claimed that it is not liberal enough. Well, I think we will all concede that the House of Commons has a right to make laws of this kind to suit itself, and we should hesitate before interfering in the slightest degree with a measure which is so exclusively one pertaining to themselves. I hold that it would be indelicate for us to interfere with the decision which has been arrived at in the other chamber, and to put our veto upon it, especially when it is strictly in accord with the right conferred upon them by the constitution. Even Mr. Blake and Mr. Laurier admitted in their speeches that the Bill was strictly constitutional. It occupied the time of the other House for two months, and every clause and line of the Bill was fully discussed. Are we to conclude, under these circumstances, that the representatives of the people in the other Chamber do not know what they require for themselves? For my part, there is not a clause of the Bill with which I would care to interfere, and therefore I shall vote for the Bill as it stands and oppose any and every amendment that may be offered. I have said before, that the Bill is not unfavourable to the Province of Quebec; it will not only retain its present electors, but it will increase their number, and I contend that Quebec will derive a special advantage beyond any which the Bill confers on the other provinces. As we all know, in that province there are very large families. Under the existing law only the father votes, while his sons living with him do not exercise the franchise. Under this Bill, not only the father but his sons will exercise the franchise, and, owing to the fact that the families are so large, there will be a very great increase in the number of voters. The same applies to the French-Canadians of the Lower Provinces. Under the circumstances, I think it is the Province of Quebec that is most favored by this Bill, and if any province should feel itself injured by the change it is Ontario. I find no fault with those who look for manhood suffrage. I would even advocate it for rural districts, and I think of all other provinces, the Province of Quebec should have least to fear from such an extension