

statement, referring to the statement of Mr. Hans Geise :

Now, there is an opinion, I think, to which we might well attach importance. It comes from a source independent at all events of the country through which this road is to travel, and these statements answer the questions that I asked at the outset, and ought, I think, remove the doubts, if any exist, as to the wisdom of the Government of the country at once, before it shall have been exploited by others, before it shall have fallen into the possession of any outside power or country, availing ourselves of the trade that will result from the construction of this work.

So you see we have every reason to believe that the present Government is thoroughly in accord with the Canadian sentiment which is now ringing from one end of Canada to the other, in favour of Canada for Canadians.

The hour for private Bills having expired, the House proceeded to the Orders of the Day.

THE FRANCHISE ACT.

House again resolved itself into Committee on Bill (No. 16) to repeal the Electoral Franchise Act, and to further amend the Dominion Elections Act.

(In the Committee.)

Mr. BENNETT. When the House rose at six o'clock, I had made the statement that there was not each year in the province of Ontario that thorough revision of the voters' lists which would be necessary in order to bring out the voting strength of political parties at an election. That view was rather demurred to by some hon. gentleman opposite who intimated that it was the duty of the municipal councils and the duty of the assessor to see that in each year a fresh list was made, and that, taking one year with another, there would be a fresh roll, and consequently from it there would be drawn a fresh list of voters. Since I last addressed the House I have looked up some figures in that regard which bear out my statement that the list would be a comparatively inefficient one, and one very far short of the full voting strength of the county. In support of that, I will quote some figures. Last year when a provincial election was impending in the province of Ontario, when the two parties were vying with each other to have all voters placed on the list, I find that in the county of Huron there was paid to the county judge in respect of the revision of the voters' lists in that county, the sum of \$204. But in the year preceding when there was no prospect that the list then being formed would be used at a local election, no regard was had to the list by either political party. That is evidenced by the fact that in that year there was only paid to the judge the trifling sum of \$33 in respect of the services performed by him in compiling the list. Now, what does that

mean? It meant that had there been a local election in the year preceding the last election, there would have been hundreds and hundreds of voters disfranchised in the county of Huron, owing to the fact that the assessor, no duty being imposed upon him by law to place these names on the voters' list, and no duty being imposed by law on the municipality to compel the placing of those men on the list, the matter being entirely neglected, the lists in the county of Huron would have been most incomplete, and have given rise to a great many complaints. Take the county of Ontario. I find that in that county last year prior to the general elections coming on, \$200 was paid to the county judge, whereas in the preceding year the trifling sum of \$27 only was paid to him. Now, what did that mean? South Ontario had as its representative until lately, the Minister of Agriculture in the Ontario Government, Mr. Dryden. But Mr. Dryden, as a member of the Government, knowing full well that there would be no election on the list of 1896, did not take upon himself the expense and the trouble of revising the list of that year. The result was that that trifling sum of \$27 was all the expense that was incurred by reason of appeals being brought before the county judge by the two political parties in that riding. But last year, knowing an election was impending, the Liberal members and the Conservative candidates put their shoulders to the wheel, and what was the result? The imperfectly framed and formed lists which had been presented and submitted to the electors, were seized upon by the parties, and they vied with one another in their efforts to have them made complete. As the figures demonstrated, the lists must have been most inefficient until the appeals were made before the county judge. The records of those two counties show beyond doubt that the lists formed and framed every year by the local municipality are most incomplete and imperfect, and if an election ever took place on those lists, there would be a hue and cry from one end of the province to the other, for the reason that thousands and tens of thousands of qualified voters would be found omitted from the lists. I would ask the Solicitor General, what is the meaning of clause 18? Clause 22 says that section 54 of the Act shall be applicable also to electors entitled to vote otherwise than by being named on the list of voters. Let me direct attention to clause 21, which states as follows:—

21. Section 52 of the said Act is hereby repealed, and in lieu thereof it is hereby enacted that no voter who has refused to take the oath of affirmation, or to answer questions or produce evidence as to qualification as aforesaid, when requested to do so, shall receive a ballot paper or be admitted to vote.

Reading those two clauses in connection with clause 18, it seems to me that this clause is certainly a most objectionable one.