

from taxation, when in possession of the property just stated. Tenants, yearly, of similar property. Sons of foregoing persons, or of widows, in possession of enough property to qualify as stated above, and actually residing on such property.

If these persons are not actually residing on the property at the time, they would not have the right to vote.

In Prince Edward Island.—Residents in an electoral division who have performed statute labour for twelve months before an election.

If they do not happen to do statute labour, they would have no right to vote in the election for members for this House. Now, I find that the variety of franchise in the different provinces is very great. Is it to be said that the wisdom of the House of Commons or this Parliament of Canada cannot devise a simpler, plainer, and more uniform franchise for the election of members to this House than by accepting the various franchises of the province, an epitome of which I have given? I think it can be done, and done without a great deal of trouble. Now, I object to the Bill for the reasons I have given. I objected to the old Dominion law, because I thought it was too expensive. I have only this to say regarding the Bill now before us, that there is no reason for pressing it through and bringing it into operation now unless hon. gentlemen opposite are so disloyal that they intend to abandon their leader and wreck the Government, and if I were to insinuate that they would feel insulted. There is no urgency in this matter. But there is urgency for making known the changes the Government intend to make in the tariff. The new tariff should be brought down. The leader of hon. gentlemen opposite has announced that they intend to continue the discussion of the Budget from day to day until it is finished, and the Budget is to be brought down next week. That is a step in the right direction. There is a frankness about that that we admire very much. But we say that there is no reason for delaying the tariff and taking up the franchise law. We hope that hon. gentlemen opposite will give us their Budget at as early a day as possible. There is no hurry so far as the franchise is concerned. If they delay they may be able to give us a better Bill than the one before us. Objectionable as the old Franchise Bill was, in many directions this is more objectionable. It involves the abandonment of a principle which I think should be held as sound. I hold that we should not abandon our rights or give them over to the provincial governments. It has been found in the case of the United States that the great trouble of their system is the weakness of the central authority. We here are drifting in the same direction when we are giving away our rights and allowing them to be exercised by the various provinces. We are weakening the hands of the central authority, and

the day will come when it will be absolutely essential to ask to enlarge our constitution, if this continues very long, and strengthen the hands of the central authority rather than weaken it, as it is proposed we should do in the Bill before us.

Mr. ROSS ROBERTSON. The Dominion Franchise Act, I have no doubt, was conceived with the ostensible desire of giving the people of this country a perfect piece of electoral mechanism. It was to be perfect in all its parts; it was to satisfy the longings of politicians who claimed that the Act was for the good of the country. These same politicians, however, were keen enough to remember that the good of the country meant the good of their own party. The Act was to bring with it a harvest of blessings, but both sides of the electorate have heartily cursed it. I am satisfied that I am not mistaken when I claim the Dominion Franchise Act has altogether failed to fulfil the promises of its creators. It was in name an Act for the enfranchisement of Canadians, but in nature and its operation it was an Act for the disfranchisement of Canadians. It was a scandal.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. ROSS ROBERTSON. Yes; it was a disgrace, and well do I know it; in the last Dominion election Canadians of full voting age had no place on the lists, which were stuffed with the names of thousands of Canadians who were either dead—or worse still, in the United States. The elections of last June and the by-elections were held on lists that were three years old, and, in these contested constituencies the doors were slammed in the faces of Canadians of 22, 23 and 24 years of age, and freely opened to excursionists from the other side of the line, who, having fulfilled their purpose, having return tickets, took the first train out of the country. I have long been against an Act which enfranchises the grave-yard and disfranchises the home. The Act, as the Solicitor General (Mr. Fitzpatrick) puts it, and I do not think he exhausted the English language in his explanation—proved too costly, not only for the taxpayers of the Dominion but for parliamentary candidates. Any measure that makes our politics expensive adds to the influence of money; and it is not a good thing that members of Parliament should enter this House a debtor to the rich men who have paid for the revision of their lists. These rich men will have a claim upon the Government which that member may support, and, sooner or later, all Governments are apt to honour the claims of wealth. I had hoped that the genius of this Government would have been equal to the preparation of an Act upon which honest men of all political parties could have agreed. There is no room for wrangling over the simple process of enfranchising every qualified Canadian.