

bersome and expensive system to which I have referred. The present Government have decided that the best way is to revert to the system which existed from confederation until 1885. And not only did they think it proper to revert to the system in existence during that series of years, but when we attempt to find what conclusion was arrived at as to the amendment of this Act of 1885, we see that those who took part in framing and carrying out that law also thought it better to revert to the system in existence before 1885. We find that in 1894 the late Sir John Thompson, the Minister of Justice of that day, having made up his mind that it was proper to alter the law as it then stood, came to the conclusion that the best system he could substitute for the Franchise Act was the system which we have here adopted, that is to say, the provincial lists.

Mr. FOSTER. Will the hon. gentleman allow me to interrupt him at that point for the sake of clearness? He has made a very broad statement which, so far as my recollection goes, is not quite correct. I would like the hon. gentleman to make that clearer.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. I will make that quite clear. My way of making it clearer would be to read from the speech made by Sir John Thompson at the time he introduced the Bill in 1894. In introducing the Bill on the 20th of May, 1894, as I find in the House of Commons Debates, page 3367, he said:

We propose important changes in the Franchise Act, and, without making a speech upon them or giving reasons, I would briefly state that we propose to adopt, as the basis of the franchise, the franchises of the various provinces of Canada.

Mr. INGRAM. Read it through.

Mr. HAGGART. You have not finished the sentence.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Yes, I finished the sentence, but I did not finish the speech. I hope that is the distinction that my hon. friend wishes to make.

Mr. FOSTER. If the hon. gentleman will allow me—I do not wish to interrupt him unnecessarily—my view of it is this, and I think the speech will carry it out, that Sir John Thompson proposed to adopt the provincial franchise lists as the basis of the Dominion list, but that he continued to keep the two cardinal principles of a control over those lists by the Dominion authorities, and an execution of the law by the Dominion authorities.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Quite true, I never said the contrary.

Mr. FOSTER. It is clearer now than it was before.

Mr. FITZPATRICK.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. No, it is not, but I will make it quite clear. When introducing the Bill, Sir John Thompson said:

The change is also proposed in this Bill which I indicated a few days ago: that the questions upon which so much difference has arisen in the past, as to the basis of the franchise, shall be adjusted by adopting the franchises of the several provinces. While I admit that this is a new departure, I deny what has been so widely asserted, that it is, in any important or practical degree, a surrender of any principle that we have contended for in times past. The number of differences which exist between the provincial franchises and the Dominion franchise as established by our own Act, are so few as not to be worth the contest and the expense which are involved in keeping them up, and the adoption of a general system which will apply both to the local and Dominion legislatures, has recommendations as regards simplicity and facilities for economy, which cannot exist under a dual system such as we have been keeping up for the past few years.

Now, I have here the law of 1894. There are differences between the Bill of Sir John Thompson and our Bill, and I think these differences were fairly pointed out by the ex-Finance Minister, that is to say, that in addition to the provincial franchises, Sir John Thompson provided that, under certain conditions, parties who would not be on the provincial lists, may be added. The second point of difference between that system and ours is that the revising officers appointed by the Federal Government remained in office, so that the revision of the lists would be made by them. We suppress the revising barrister. These are the only two differences.

Mr. FOSTER. That is about right.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Now, the question will arise as to whether, under existing conditions, it is worth while keeping up a system which would entail all the expense necessitated under the Bill proposed by Sir John Thompson. The difference of expense is very material, and it is a question as to whether circumstances justify that additional expense. I think that when we come to examine this Bill in detail, we will find that the difference between the provincial and the federal franchises is so small at the present time—and we will take that as our guide for the future—that they are not worth the additional expense of providing a supplementary list, which was really provided for by Sir John Thompson's Bill. Take the provinces of Ontario and Quebec with which I am most familiar. In the province of Ontario the revision of the municipal lists, in a great majority of cases, with the exception of cities and towns, takes place before the county court judges; and what better revisors can we have than the county court judges? In our system in the province of Quebec, with which I am more familiar, the revision of the list is made by way of appeal to the judges of our Superior