

a sufficient answer to my hon. friend the Solicitor General. We tried the experiment, and it proved to be a failure, and this Parliament, in protection of its privileges, passed the Act of 1885. Whether that Act was a good or a bad Act is not the question. There are many of us who are ready to admit that in operation it proved cumbersome and expensive; and, as has been pointed out in this House before, the Conservative party, under Sir John Thompson introduced an Act for the purpose of simplifying and cheapening its operation. But the fact that the Act is defective in some particulars is no reason why a measure of this kind should be introduced. You may amend or improve the Act, but there is no reason why you should deprive this Parliament of its privileges. Surely there is enough statesmanship on the other side of the House to manage affairs a little better than that. Surely it is not necessary, in order to cheapen the operation of the Franchise Act, that the privileges of this Parliament should be taken away from it and handed over to the local legislatures. My hon. friend says we may take these privileges back again; but why does he hand them over in the meantime? We have already tried the experiment; the experiment proved a failure; and why does he propose to repeat it now? Surely, it would be more reasonable for the leaders on both sides of the House to meet together and endeavour to arrange some compromise in regard to this matter, so that this House shall still be seized of such an important privilege as this. What possible excuse is there for giving back to the local legislatures a power which they have already been entrusted with, and which they have abused?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The reason I asked the hon. gentleman for the date when the offences were committed by Nova Scotia, which he said had led to the passage of the Franchise Act of 1885, was this: The Bill which led up to that Act was, I believe, the Bill which the Government led by Sir John Macdonald, introduced into the Dominion Parliament in the year 1871 or 1872. Now, if the Acts which my hon. friend speaks of had been committed prior to that time, it is most extraordinary that the Conservative Government, for thirteen long years, failed to do justice to the people and protect them from those outrages, and allowed the general elections to be held three times on those fraudulent lists which the hon. gentleman refers to. I think I can give a better explanation for the passage of the Franchise Act of 1885 than the one which my hon. friend gives. Having listened to the debate of three months which ended in the passage of that Act, I think I can safely say that you will not find that any person who was in favour of that Act ever suggested the alleged outrages by the legislature of Nova Scotia, now cited for the first time, as the moving cause of that legislation. The object of that Bill was, I

Mr. McNEILL.

think, known to every person. The late Government had exhausted their methods for obtaining favourable verdicts from the people. They had passed a Gerrymander Bill which did violence to every sense of right, and they had so mismanaged the affairs of the country that at last a rebellion broke out in the North-west that threatened to sweep the Government from power. That, I think, was the moving cause that incited the Government to introduce the Franchise Bill; and though it failed to accomplish what its movers designed it should accomplish, they were unable to abandon it, and it had to go through in its present form. The ground advanced by Sir John Macdonald for the measure was to secure what he called uniformity throughout the whole Dominion in the franchise under which members were elected to this House. While many trifling reasons were advanced, the real and only standing ground the Government adopted in respect to that measure was uniformity and, as it was called, control of their franchise in order to have uniformity. These alleged outrages are, I think, the creation of an inventive mind at the present time.

Mr. McNEILL. In regard to the observations of the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat, I am surprised that any hon. member who heard the debates of 1885, as he did and as I did, should have forgotten the reference that were made to the attacks by the local legislatures at that time.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Side references.

Mr. McNEILL. I do not know what my hon. friend means by the interruption. I say that references were made, and I am very much surprised my hon. friend has forgotten the fact. That was one of the principal reasons at that time for the action of the House. How has my hon. friend met the statement that in 1882 this Act was passed? He has not met it at all. Does he pretend to say that Act was passed for no reason at all? Does he mean to say that this House passed an Act in 1882 protecting the privileges of certain subjects of Her Majesty in Nova Scotia from the action of the local legislature of that province, when there was no need for such protection? My hon. friend has not, in the slightest degree, answered the objections that I have brought forward.

Mr. GILLIES. I am not at all surprised at the statement we have just heard from the hon. Postmaster General (Mr. Mulock), because we have had already frequent displays of lamentable ignorance on the part of the hon. gentleman concerning the administration of the department he is supposed to control. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that he should be entirely ignorant of the administration of matters affecting the franchise of the different provinces of the Dominion. He asked my hon. friend from North Bruce (Mr. McNeill), in a very flippant manner, to tell him the