

principle of the repeal of the Franchise Act, but we are now discussing who shall be qualified to vote, and upon that point, it seems to me, the discussion has not wandered in any way beyond legitimate bounds. There is this also to be remembered—and it may be an excuse for any disquisitions, as the hon. member calls them, that they may be entered upon—we find the members of the Government themselves differing as to the scope of the question. Before we had sacrificed the rights of the poor Indian, I understood the Solicitor General to say that he intended to provide for the maintenance of the Indian franchise.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. No, I positively deny that I said anything of the kind, but I said I would provide for the case of public employees.

Mr. MONK. At any rate, after the House took recess, and we met again at eight o'clock, the Prime Minister laid down, as I understood it, as an absolute principle, that we must keep the local lists and not vary them, that we were not going into the details of the local lists to save some voters of a particular class, but we are going to adopt a principle, and would not vary from it in any way. The scope of the amendment which I now propose is to preserve the right of officials, Dominion or provincial, whether their names be on the list or not, whereas the amendment of my hon. friend (Mr. Russell) covers only those officials whose names may be on the list :

Notwithstanding anything in the law of any province, no official of the Federal Government of the provincial government, regular soldiers or persons enrolled in military schools, shall be disqualified to vote as an elector at any future election of a member or members to serve in the House of Commons.

It seems to me that we cannot be taxed, as I deem it unfairly, with undue zeal to maintain the rights of the voters. It is a well-known principle of the political institutions under which we live, that the franchise, once given, shall not be taken away from the voter, and it is also well known that the greatest ignominy that can be inflicted on any class of men who have enjoyed the franchise is, for some fault they have committed, to withdraw that franchise.

Sir, I approach the discussion of this clause in as judicial a temper as possible. That was insisted upon last night by the leader of the House, and I do not find it a difficult task, because I think we have all agreed as to the necessity of the repeal of the Franchise Act. But what I would draw the attention of the committee to is this : Not once, in the discussion which has taken place, and which has been somewhat protracted already, has any fault been found with the substance of the Franchise Act, as it exists. The fault found with that Act is, that it is too costly and burdensome. What we claim, on this side of the House, is,

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that it would have been possible to have removed these deficiencies in the previous legislation—deficiencies which are of an accidental nature, if I may use that expression—without making such a drastic change as is proposed by the present Bill. Two or three times already, we have been solicited by the Prime Minister to look for an example to the condition of things that exists in the United States, where the franchise for the election of the members of Congress is the franchise of the different states. But it seems to me, that the United States is the last country to which we should look for an example with regard to our franchise. As we all know, the political conditions there are totally different from our own. They have a presidential government, while we have a parliamentary government, and members of the committee know how very different these two forms of government are. They have, as has been pointed out, a central power which derives its existence from the states forming the confederacy, whereas here we have a power existing in our central body which power owes its existence, not to the provinces that form the Dominion, but to a higher and independent power. And whereas, in the United States, any attempt on the part of the federal power to control the franchise would be resented by the states, here it has always been contemplated that we, in this Parliament, should control our electoral franchise.

Even the 15th amendment to the American constitution, passed after the war of secession, which provided that no person's right to vote should be impaired by reason of colour or any previous condition of servitude, is an amendment which met with much opposition in the states. Even at the present time, in some of those states where that disposition of the constitution has been directly frustrated, attempts are already on foot to have that disposition changed, and the right of the state to control the franchise remains intact as it was before. It seems to me that the conditions here are entirely different. When the neighbouring states formed themselves into a federated power they merely coalesced in order to protect themselves from what they deemed a common enemy; whereas here the reason of our confederation was the prospect of welding together the different parts then divided, of British North America, and of forming one homogeneous community, one great dependency of the British Empire. In our case, the major part of the power was reserved for the Federal Government, whereas in the United States the contrary rule exists, as we all know, and there it is only the enumerated and stated powers which belong to the central government. Therefore, I consider that this measure, as has already been stated, of returning to the provincial franchise, is a retrograde step, if my conception of what was intended at the time of confederation is correct. Now, in regard to the remarks of the right hon.