

fidant that they possessed the affections and the confidence of the people of the Province of Ontario, why did they stoop to perform such a mean and contemptible act as to attack the seats of the leading men of the Opposition? But this was on a par with the hon. gentleman's attempt to obtain possession of the electoral vote of the Dominion of Canada by the money which was received from Sir Hugh Allan, and now to crown his efforts in this direction he brings down this Bill, at a late date in the Session, thinking the representatives of the people will be tired out and will not be inclined to fight this Bill, and to fight for the rights of the people. But in this respect he is mistaken. I am satisfied that the small band who sit on the Opposition benches to-day will fight it out all summer on this line.

Mr. WHITE (Hastings). Barking dogs never bite.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order.

Mr. WHITE. I am in order. Barking dogs never bite.

Mr. SOMERVILLE. All these attempts were in character. In the first place, he tried to corrupt the electorate with money; in the next place, he tried to obtain possession of the votes of the people by his Gerrymander Bill, and now he has introduced this Franchise Bill for the purpose of disfranchising a large number of the electors of the Dominion, and for the purpose of getting control of the revision of the lists and appointing his own creatures to positions of trust and emolument to carry out this attempt to control the electoral vote of the Dominion. I say it is not creditable to the right hon. the Minister who leads the Government, and is not creditable to those who support it, that, in the fullness of their strength, when they are boasting of their strength in every debate which takes place in the House, they should stoop to take such measures as they have taken in introducing this Bill, for the purpose of strengthening their position. If they are strong in the confidence of the people they do not need to introduce any such measure, and, if they do succeed in pushing it through, I am satisfied that there are many independent Conservatives throughout this Dominion who will be able to say that they have given their last Conservative vote. It gives the Opposition party considerable strength to know that a break has been made in the Ministerial ranks, by the fact that at least two gentlemen on that side of the House have had sufficient independence to express their opinions in regard to this iniquitous measure, and I am satisfied that there are many more over there sitting on that side of the House who would gladly endorse their views, were it not that the party whip is brought to bear on them, and they are induced to forego their own convictions and to support this measure.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. I would not, at this late stage of the debate, have attempted to take up the time of the House, were it not that I feel that, in a measure of such immense importance as the one now before the House, it is the duty of every member to put himself on record. I do not intend to take up the time of the House at any great length; still, there are two or three features of the measure that I wish particularly to notice. The claim has been made that it is necessary that we should have a uniform franchise throughout the whole Dominion, for the sake of uniformity. That, I think, as far as I remember, is about the most cogent argument that has been used by gentlemen on the other side of the House. Now, the question comes: Is there any necessity for this measure? Have the people expressed any wish that such a measure as this should be placed upon the Statute Book? I have not heard the wish expressed by a single elector since I first had the honor of having a seat in this House, and so far as the matter of necessity is concerned, that, I think, is set completely at rest, by the fact

Mr. SOMERVILLE (Brant):

that for seventeen or eighteen years we have been working with the franchise that we have adopted, and have never found the least friction or necessity for changing that franchise. If we wanted any further confirmation of it, we can find it in the fact that, in the neighboring Republic, with all their diversified interests, with all their large extent of territory, with all their resources, and with their immense population, for nearly 110 years they have found the State franchise perfectly satisfactory and perfectly sufficient. There was, then, no necessity whatever for introducing this measure. But there are some other questions that have to be taken into consideration. First of all, there is the question of convenience. Now, I have had a good deal to do in elections in my time. I have had a good deal to do with arranging the electoral divisions, and the convenience of the people ought to be one of the first things that the Government and the Parliament consult. I can remember when, in our Province, the municipal franchise was in one form, and the parliamentary franchise in another; when the polling places were not coincident, and there is not a member from Ontario, I believe, but remembers what a trouble it was to get people to understand where they ought to go to vote, and many of the votes were lost, because the people went from one place to another, and could not find the proper place to vote. However, the Government took the matter into consideration, and they fixed the basis of the polling divisions; they also made the number of voters in each polling sub-division the same for both municipal and parliamentary elections, and I think I may say that the municipal councils throughout the country have made the polling divisions for both elections the same. What is proposed by this measure? It proposes that these boundaries shall be completely obliterated, so far as the Dominion elections are concerned, and that these irresponsible parties, these parties who are responsible to nobody, should have it in their power to fix the boundaries as they see fit. They may gerrymander them if they see fit, and may make them as long as our friend from North Ontario told us his constituency was, and may put the people to all the inconvenience they may choose. But, fix it how they will, unless they take the same basis as that fixed for the municipal and provincial polling places, confusion and inconvenience must necessarily ensue. Closely connected with the question of convenience is the question of cost. Now, Sir, that is a most serious question. I would like to ask this House if the state of our finances at the present moment warrants us in incurring any additional expenditure? Is there a man who has considered the question intelligently who does not know that if this Bill becomes law a most alarming increase of expenditure must be incurred? The hon. member for West Lambton (Mr. Lister) fixed the amount at at least half a million dollars, and I believe he was, if anything, below the mark. I speak with knowledge of the subject. I had four years' experience in preparing voters' lists, and after that I had twelve years' experience in paying for them after they were made; and I state, as my firm conviction, that if this Bill becomes law, at least half a million dollars will be involved annually in direct payment by the Government to these officials and the incidental expenses. But there are other considerations than those of cost, which do not seem to weigh much with hon. gentlemen opposite. It was only last night that we heard the hon. member for Montreal East (Mr. Coursol) say that we had only to consider the claims of the majority; that if a thing was good for the majority it ought to become law. But there are gentlemen who are in the minority now, and who, if this becomes law, must be put to an enormous expense personally. It will not affect hon. gentlemen opposite; for, according to the Government plan, their expenses will be all paid; but if we look at the cost of the voters' lists and the cost of appeals, you will see that gentlemen on this side of the House, so long as they