

illustration of putting fictitious names on the list, and the person who acted as the reviser refusing to strike them off, because the parties who objected to them could not prove that they had served the parties with a notice, the fact being that the reason why they could not serve them with a notice was that no such persons existed. I give that to show that a measure that involves such an outrage upon everything that would be held to be fair and honourable and just in the character of a franchise, ought not to be passed by this House. The old law is not under discussion. I cannot understand why hon. gentlemen opposite have paid so much attention to the old law, because in 1895 the leader of the Conservative Government announced in this House that he intended to repeal it, and to-night we have repealed it by the clause which we have already passed. The question now is, can we not find some basis upon which gentlemen on both sides of the House, who desire to treat one of the most vitally important questions that can ever be considered in a free legislature, can arrive at some general principles which will prevent these acts of great injustice being perpetrated in the future? I do not see any difficulty, if you proceed, as Sir John Thompson proposed you should, for the purpose of lessening the expenditure connected with the list. If you take the franchise of the local legislatures as a basis but still preserve that independent control that will secure some security to the people of this country that even-handed justice will be meted out to every independent elector in this country entitled to use the franchise, that is all we ask. We do not ask for the maintenance of the old law, although it is true beyond controversy that it is much fairer than the one proposed, and I have no hesitation in saying that if the old law had been open to the objection made against it on the other side, namely, that it gave the Dominion Government an inordinate power of controlling the constituencies, we would not have had this proposition to repeal it to-day. I am inclined to think that hon. gentlemen opposite would have held to it, but it is because they know, after many long years of trial, that that law was not open to any such objection and that it has never been charged against it that it has been the means of any undue influence being used to prevent a free expression of public opinion in the different constituencies, that they now ask to repeal it. No man in this House ought to be willing that the question of the franchise for this Parliament should be a party question. In a question of that kind we should rise above and beyond party, and be ready to treat it fairly, without reference to party, and see if we cannot engraft upon this measure, taking the provincial lists as a basis, such action as will secure to every independent elector in this country, who is entitled to

be put upon the roll, the putting of his name upon the roll and prevent men not entitled to that privilege from being put on it. There ought to be no difficulty in half a dozen gentlemen on both sides arriving at a common ground that would be acceptable to both sides of the House, and thus save a great deal of heart-burning and feeling of deep injustice, which will undoubtedly prevail in the great majority of the people, if this measure be forced through in its present form.

I shall just read a short extract from an article in a newspaper, which is a strong supporter of the present Government, on the Franchise Bill, and that paper is the Manitoba "Free Press." After saying a good deal against the old franchise law, which I shall not trouble the House with reading, as it is rather too long, and my voice is not in a condition to read more than I am obliged to, the Manitoba "Free Press" says:

Now the Liberals have their turn, and one of their first acts is to repeal the present law. They intend to wipe it out and substitute the provincial lists, without any federal interference.

There is the point at issue between us. We do not object to taking the provincial lists as a basis, but we do object to making them absolute and taking all control and power from the Dominion Parliament. How long hon. gentlemen opposite may be in a position to exercise power, I shall not undertake to say, because prophesying is a rather dangerous thing, but I say that we are willing that the federal control should be in their hands, and they ought not to vote want of confidence in themselves and say that they are afraid to trust themselves with that power. I would infinitely prefer that it should be in their hands than that these lists should not be subject to federal influence at all.

The "Free Press" goes on to say:

In one province, Manitoba, the principle of government control of the lists is the very foundation of the law, and in its operation an election is assured in every doubtful constituency by the dishonest practices of the registration clerks. The law does not contribute more effectively to the stuffing of the lists in the interest of the ruling party if it had been specially and avowedly designed for that purpose. In Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island the laws are also capable of gross abuse. We need not inquire whether the Liberals have forgotten or swallowed their scruples of 1885; it is sufficient to know that by the Bill now before the House a federal election law will be imposed on this province, and on other provinces, that will be infinitely worse than the existing Dominion law was ever claimed to be. Our only hope of escape from a measure under which the electorate will be left at the mercy of the Government agents, and the free expression of the popular will need not be permitted, lies in the Senate. To that body we make our appeal, and should the Bill go to it in its present shape we ask, in the name of electoral purity and electoral decency, that it be rejected.