

try to know that very often the judgment of a partisan may be blinded and warped. I understand fully, I think, the motive of the opposition which has come to this Bill from gentlemen on the other side of the House, and especially from the members from the province of Manitoba. They dread the effect of the law of their own province if it is to be administered not by officers appointed by the government which would be the case if this Bill were to become law. Let me say to my hon. were to become law, let me say to my hon. friends on the other side of the House, yes, let me appeal at once to their sense of fairness, justice and equity, that there are men on this side of the House who dread the effect of that law if it is to continue to be administered, as it has been, by officers appointed by our opponents as will be the case if this Bill or some other Bill is not passed by this House. Those who oppose this Bill in this House at this moment, dread it in anticipation; those who support it dread the effect of the existing law of Manitoba not in anticipation, but from past experience, and if we are to approach this question without any equivocation, but in justice between man and man, it reduces itself to this that you gentlemen on the other side of the House do not want to go before the country on electoral lists prepared by your opponents and we on this side of the House do not care to go to the country on electoral lists prepared by our opponents. Sir, this seems to me to be the true question, to be the true position and the problem which is now before us. The principle which shall regulate and determine the franchise, whether it shall be controlled by Dominion authorities or by provincial authorities, is a question upon which there has always been a deep line of cleavage between the two parties in Canada. We on this side of the House, the Liberal party, have always maintained that unless there be strong reason to the contrary the lists should be prepared by the provincial authorities, whereas gentlemen on the other side of the House have held the unqualified opinion that under all circumstances the lists should be prepared by the parliament to which the members of this House have to be elected. The opinions held respectively by the two parties have been more than once set before this House by motions which speak for each party. In 1885, when the Franchise Bill was introduced, I was entrusted by my friends with the duty of moving the first amendment, setting forth the principle under which we thought the franchise ought to be regulated and administered. I moved this motion, which was a party motion, and which spoke our mind upon this subject:

In the opinion of this House it is preferable to continue the plan which has been adopted ever since confederation of utilizing for the elections to this House the provincial franchise and voters' lists.

Many similar motions have been passed from time to time, but this one properly and very accurately, I think, describes the position we then took and have maintained ever since. When the repeal of the Franchise Bill came up for discussion in 1898, a gentleman then a member sitting on the opposite side, Mr. Powell, of Westmoreland, moved this amendment:

That this House, while desirous of reducing the expense of the preparation of the lists, so far as may be practicable, considers that no system of franchise will be satisfactory which does not preserve federal control over both the basis of the suffrages and the voters' lists.

There, Sir, you see, in concrete form, the respective opinions held by the two parties on this important question. Throughout this debate the members of the opposition have piled quotation upon quotation in order to prove and maintain, at least to their satisfaction, that in introducing this Bill, which in certain provinces and under certain conditions provides that the franchise shall be regulated by this House, that we are in doing this inconsistent, that we are going back upon our record and departing from the policy we have always maintained. This criticism in view of the attitude which has been taken by those who make it at this moment, seems to me, if I may say so without offence, singularly inane. I could understand this criticism, if those who made it were to maintain the policy which they have always maintained. Their policy was and always has been that this House should keep the control over the franchise and over the lists, and when this Bill was presented, taking the control not over the franchise, but partially over certain lists, I cannot understand that these gentlemen can utter the reproach of inconsistency. If we are inconsistent, what are they themselves? If we are departing from our principles, what are they doing? They have always maintained that this House should keep control over the lists. If we were to say that we were going to adopt that principle, I could understand their criticism, but instead of that, their whole claim at this moment is that we are inconsistent. Sir, is it not a fact that in 1885 the Conservative party crammed down our throats a system whereby the lists were taken from independent officers and placed in the hands of officers appointed by themselves, and, therefore, according to the ethics that now prevail, partisans? Yet, Sir, in 1885, though we fought that measure as effectively, as vigorously as I think a measure ever was fought, we never thought of resorting to a refusal of Supply; we never thought of resorting to disorganization of the public service, and if in such questions there be a reason to refuse Supply, we had then ten times more reason than there is at this.