

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. The hon. gentleman has missed the point.

Mr. McNEILL. I do not think I have missed the point. I think that is exactly what the hon. gentleman was endeavouring to persuade us of, that this Act had been placed on the Statute-book without any good reason whatever. He said it was absolutely unnecessary, that it should not have been placed there.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. If the hon. gentleman will permit me to make a remark—my point was that it was unnecessary, though that was not the main point. The main point was that if disqualification ever existed, it had been removed three years before the Dominion Franchise Act was passed.

Mr. McNEILL. But the hon. gentleman is not dealing with the point at all. The hon. gentleman said this Act was unnecessary, and in order that he should persuade this House of that fact, he must assume that all the representatives of his own province who were in this House had not among them sufficient ability to explain to this House the fact he has now endeavoured to place before us, and that if they did at that time lay before the House the facts that he has laid before us to-night, or the assumed facts that he has laid before us to-night, either this House was so stupid that they could not understand them, or this House behaved so improperly as to do what they knew was improper or unnecessary. Now, with regard to the other point, my hon. friend says that it was quite unnecessary that the Franchise Act of 1885 should be passed, because of his alleged statement that this Act of 1882 had already been passed. I say, Mr. Speaker, that no stronger reason could possibly be urged for the passing of that Franchise Act than the fact that this House had been obliged, in the protection of its privileges, to put this Act of 1882 on the Statute-book. What stronger argument could possibly be advanced? It may be they guarded the privileges of this House so far as that particular Act is concerned, but that did not cover the Dominion of Canada. If conduct of that kind were possible in Nova Scotia, and if this House found it necessary for the protection of its privileges, to guard itself against the action of the Government of Nova Scotia, it was equally necessary that it should guard itself against similar acts on the part of other provinces which might come into force at any time.

Mr. McISAAC. I would not say a word on this occasion were it not for the reference which the hon. member for Pictou (Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper) made to a district in the county of Guysborough. Personally, I do not know very much about

Mr. McNEILL.

it, but the hon. gentleman says that in the district of Larry's River, about the year 1890, some 207 names were put on the provincial list, and he says that he has information that only about seven of them were really qualified to go on the list.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. Seven who were on the assessment roll.

Mr. McISAAC. I know nothing about it, except what the hon. gentleman says. But if this be true, his inference is that the provincial Franchise Act in Nova Scotia is unfair as compared to that of the Dominion. Now, if these statements are true, that there are only seven qualified electors in the district of Larry's River, and that 200 were on who had no right to be there, what will this House think when I say that in that same district, under the Dominion Franchise Act, about the same number got on the list, which proves that the Dominion list is no better. The hon. gentleman will remember that the Conservative candidate who ran in that county the last election, got at least seven votes in that district, as many as he says were qualified, but I am told that the Liberal member had over 100 majority, thus showing that if there was anything wrong in connection with names on the provincial list, the same wrong existed in reference to the Dominion Franchise Act. Therefore, there is no argument in the statement of the hon. gentleman. I am sure the information he gives cannot be very reliable, and I am quite sure there was no fraud or improper conduct on the part of those preparing the Dominion and local lists in Larry's River. I am glad the hon. member for Annapolis (Mr. Mills) made the statement to the House, because I am aware that there were many hon. members from Ontario and elsewhere who were under the impression that the Franchise Act of Nova Scotia did disqualify Dominion officials from voting at Dominion elections. The hon. member said that revisers through ignorance left Dominion officials off the list. Perhaps it may be so in Annapolis, but in my part of the province I never knew such ignorance to exist. So far as I am concerned I would much prefer under existing conditions for party purposes to have the Franchise Act than the Bill now before the House. If the old Act were continued we could make some use of the machinery which hon. gentlemen opposite have made use of when in power. We could utilize the revising barristers and the revising barrister's clerks and so get some of the advantages the hon. gentlemen obtained. Under the Act now proposed the same advantage will be secured by hon. gentlemen opposite as by ourselves. In some districts there will be Reform and in others Conservative officers, and so one political party will not have any advantage over the other.