

second reading, and should go to the Committee on Private Bills for investigation of the allegations set out in the petition. I would not advocate that course if the rule were not well understood, that in reading a private Bill the second time we are not committed to its principle. I am somewhat doubtful that the facts which are contained in the preamble of the Bill can be made out, but if the facts are made out we can deal with the principle of the Bill when it comes back from the committee. So far as I am concerned I would be disposed to support the second reading. As a general principle, I am opposed to persons obtaining exemption from the general rule by means of special legislation: nevertheless, under the circumstances, I would consent to the second reading.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the second time.

#### WESTERN LIFE ASSURANCE CO.

Mr. CURRAN (for Mr. MACDONALD, Winnipeg) moved the second reading of Bill (No. 48) to incorporate the Western Life Assurance Company.

Mr. COCKBURN. There is in Toronto an insurance company doing business under the same name, and when this Bill goes into Committee I shall move that some change be made in the title of the Bill.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the second time.

#### FRANCHISE ACT REPEAL BILL.

Mr. CAMERON (Huron) moved the second reading of Bill (No. 8) to repeal An Act respecting the Electoral Franchise. He said: I desire to say but a very few words with reference to this Bill. The Bill which I propose by my Bill to repeal, passed the House of Commons some five years ago, and I can safely say that no Bill affecting the representation of the people in Parliament, that has received the Royal Assent, for the last quarter of a century has proved more entirely unsatisfactory than the Act called the Electoral Franchise Act. The law itself, in my judgment, at the time it was introduced in Parliament, was wholly uncalled for. There were no demands for it, no petitions presented in Parliament in favour of it, no public clamour for it. It was a Bill that was entirely uncalled for; and I think the experience of the last five or six years has shown it to be a harsh Bill, a vicious Bill in principle, and a Bill difficult to work out in detail. It was, I believe, introduced into Parliament by the First Minister solely for a political end. I believe it was forced through Parliament, against the strenuous efforts of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, solely for a political end. I believe it was introduced and forced through Parliament and received its final stage with a view to benefit one political party and damage, if not destroy, the other political party, and the effect of the Bill has proved eminently unsatisfactory to both the political parties. I believed then, and I believe now, and more especially now, that the honest sentiment of the great mass of the Dominion is adverse to this Bill. I believe the honest sentiment of the majority of the members of Parliament is not in harmony with this Bill; I believe it is a Bill that has proved as unsatisfactory to hon. gentlemen opposite as I know it has proved unsatisfactory to hon. gentlemen

Sir JOHN THOMPSON.

men on this side of the House. The honest sentiment of the country, as well as the experience of the last six years during which we have had this Electoral Franchise Bill in operation,—no, not in operation, sometimes suspended—has pronounced decidedly and emphatically against the longer continuance on the Statute-book of this Bill. The experience of the last six years has shown beyond a reasonable peradventure that the Electoral Franchise Bill has opened wide and free all the doors for all kinds of electoral misconduct and electoral frauds. I believe the experience of the last six years has shown us, beyond all doubt, that it is a harsh Bill to both political parties, a harsh Bill to the candidates who are seeking the honour of representing the people in Parliament. The Bill when introduced by the First Minister, six years ago, was based, the hon. gentleman told us, on four grounds. He said, as will be found in *Hansard* of 1885, page 1134, that the Bill was necessary, that a system of representation applicable to all the provinces was an absolute necessity, that a representation of every class alike in all the provinces was a necessity, that the franchise in all the provinces should be exactly alike, and further, that every interest in every province alike should be represented in this Parliament. Before the Bill had received its second reading, before it had received the Royal Assent, every assurance the First Minister gave us as to the necessity of a Dominion Electoral Franchise ceased to exist, and was practically abandoned. We have not now, we never had, under this Electoral Franchise Bill, a system alike in all the provinces. We have not now, we never had since the Electoral Franchise Bill received the Royal assent, a system of elections that was exactly the same in all the provinces. We never had, and we have not now, the same classes in all the provinces represented alike in the House of Commons in Canada. We never had under this Bill, and we have not now, the same interests and the same classes represented alike in all the provinces in the Parliament of Canada. The Province of Ontario has not now the same system of representation the Province of Prince Edward Island possesses. The Province of Quebec has not now the same classes represented as the Province of British Columbia. The two older provinces have not now, and never had under this Bill, the same classes and interests represented in this Parliament as the North-West Territories, as the Province of British Columbia, the Province of Manitoba and the Province of Prince Edward Island. A different system and a different franchise prevails. In one province we have manhood suffrage, in another province we have universal suffrage practically, in another province we have a suffrage based on a real property qualification, and in another province the suffrage is based on a real and personal property qualification. So that the grounds on which the First Minister insisted that this Bill should be passed through Parliament, and was a necessity, ceased to exist before the Bill received the Royal Assent; and for this reason, if for no other, I submit it ought to be repealed by the Parliament of Canada. The Bill is open to grave objections apart from the point I have already been discussing. I have stated that it has been the experience of the last six years in carrying out this Bill that it opens the doors wide