

be a revising barrister. We may, therefore, understand how careful the Government was, in framing this Act, to separate the revising barrister from all political influence. Now, Mr. Speaker, I was very much surprised when I heard the right hon. gentleman make use of these words in his speech on the second reading :

On this side of the House we have an absolute hostility to the revising officer and the lists prepared by the revising officer. During the last twenty years we have suffered too much at the hands of the revising officers.

Now, I cannot understand why the right hon. gentleman should have such a dislike to the revising officers, a body of men that cannot in any degree with truth be charged with partiality, a body of men who are eminently qualified for their positions, a body of men who discharge their duties wisely and well, a body of men that are not only above political considerations not only above the Government that appointed them, but are irremovable except by action of the House of Commons. It is for their eminent fairness that they can be obnoxious to the right hon. gentleman. A court of revision constituted upon fair lines is unsuitable to him and distasteful to the party that he ostensibly leads. A little further on, the hon. gentleman said :

This very Franchise Act was an abuse of power whereby the revision of the lists was placed in the hands of henchmen of the Administration.

Well, I humbly submit, that this was an asseveration that should not have come from the right hon. gentleman. I do not think it is in consonance with the dignity of the position the hon. gentleman holds in this country. It is an allegation that cannot be substantiated in any way by the right hon. gentleman, or by any other gentleman behind him in this House or country. That they were henchmen of the Administration is an impossibility, because they were above, not only every political party, but above the Government that appointed them. Now, the hon. gentleman who introduced this Bill the other day, the Solicitor General, whom I am glad to see in his seat, made a very good speech. Whatever his political views may be, that hon. gentleman generally succeeds in making clear any Act that he introduces into this House, and I must compliment him upon the very clear and brief statement that he made when introducing the measure we are now dealing with. The hon. gentleman claims, as one of the merits of this Bill, that it is based on a Bill introduced some years previously by the late Sir John Thompson. Well, Mr. Speaker, I was glad to see the hon. gentleman, in this indirect way, pay to the late Sir John Thompson that high compliment that was his due. I am one of those that did not wait until Sir John Thompson was in his grave to pay tribute to the sterling honesty, superior ability and high-minded pur-

Mr. GILLIES.

poses of that great and lamented statesman. But I would remind the hon. gentleman that the Bill he introduced differs very widely from the Bill which was introduced by Sir John Thompson in June, 1894. The present Bill transfers absolutely over to the local legislatures the control of the franchise under which members are elected to the House of Commons, whereas, the Bill introduced by Sir John Thompson retained in the federal Parliament the right to control its own franchise. The Solicitor General will see at once the difference between the Act he is now promoting and the Act introduced by Sir John Thompson. I am quite ready to admit that Sir John Thompson stated that the property qualification of the electors in the different provinces for elections to the House of Commons should be the same as the property qualification of electors for provincial purposes ; but he did not go further. And the selection of the provincial standard of property qualification was but one means and only one means of enabling the revising officer to make up his lists. If the hon. Solicitor General proposed to go only that far, I will at once agree with him, and accept it as a sort of compromise. If he adopts the property qualification in the different provinces and maintains the franchise within federal control I am disposed to go that far ; but when we are called upon to abrogate our functions as legislators and delegate our right, power and authority to an irresponsible legislature to say who shall vote for members of this House, that would be a humiliating and unwarrantable abdication of those functions which we are supposed to discharge here. In order to show that Sir John Thompson intended that the control of the preparation of the lists should rest in the federal authorities, I need not cite the speech he delivered in introducing the Bill. He said :

We uphold the feature which I regard as the principal feature of the Franchise Act of 1885, and that is that the revision shall take place by officers under the control of this Parliament and of the Federal Government. The great principle which underlay the Franchise Act of 1885 was the control by this Parliament over matters connected with the franchise. It was contended that control should exist in two branches ; in the first place, as regards the laying down of the franchise itself, and, in the second place, as regards the administration of the law by which the franchise was carried out.

The House will see that Sir John Thompson distinctly laid down these two propositions, namely, that the Federal Parliament prescribe the franchise under which persons shall be voters at Dominion elections ; and he also stated most emphatically and unequivocally that the make-up of these lists was to be within federal control. I should like to ask the hon. Solicitor General to explain how he is going to reconcile with the ordinary idea of justice the fact that he under his proposed Bill will disfranchise