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WHAT may be regarded as the test vote of the strength of parties in the new Parliament was taken on Wednesday, 20th inst., on Mr. Cameron's motion for the second reading of his Bill to repeal the Electoral Franchise Act. It is characteristic of the system of government by party that in the House of Commons and, we may pretty safely add, in the whole country, the main interest in the vote was centred not so much on the merits or demerits of the Bill as on the cue the vote would afford to the exact size of the Government majority. Another outcome of the system, which, rightly viewed, should be still more humiliating to a people proud of their intelligence and their democratic institutions, was that no one who understands the situation can regard the vote as a true index to the convictions of the individual voters on the merits of the Franchise Act. On the contrary everyone knew from the first that the side on which the vote of each one of the rank and file should be cast was determined, not by himself from unbiased study of the question, but for him by the party leaders or the party caucus. We refer to this feature of our system of Government, time-honoured though that system is, simply as a fact which must always be taken into account in estimating parliamentary opinion as represented by a party vote. We have no wish to ignore the practical advantages of the system, or the practical difficulties that would stand in the way of any attempt to carry out a better. Regarded as a party test the result indicates a Government majority of twenty-eight to thirty. This is, as it was reasonable to expect, about a mean between the numbers predicted by the sanguine partisans on either side. Unless the revelations before the Committee of Privileges and Elections in the McGreevy enquiry should prove specially damaging to the Government, the probabilities are that it, as the winning side, will grow stronger rather than weaker with the lapse of time, though the result of the October negotiations with the United States authorities will constitute an uncertain and possibly disturbing element.

TURNING for a moment to consider Mr. Cameron's motion on its merits, we cannot conceal our conviction that the Opposition had the best of the argument, and that many of those who voted from party loyalty in favour of Sir John Thompson's amendment were privately of that opinion. The question has two distinct aspects; the one looking to the general principles on which the existing Act is based, the other to the character and workings of this particular measure. Glancing first at the latter and assuming, for argument's sake, that it is in accordance with sound constitutional principles that the Federal Parliament should prescribe the franchise of its own members, it surely does not follow that it should have the lists prepared by officials of its own appointment and printed in its own printing office, or that it should entrust the management of the elections to returning officers selected by itself and thus retain a certain power of control over the workings of the electoral machinery. If a tithing of the irregularities and frauds which are declared by the Opposition speakers to have taken place, and which were not, it was observable, indignantly denied by the Government leaders, were of actual occurrence no further proof could be needed to show that the administration of the Act lends itself readily to partisan abuses. These charges are, by the way, of too grave a character to be passed over, and if those who made them really believe them to be founded on facts they will do well to ask for a special committee to investigate them, according to Mr. Charlton's declared purpose. It is humiliating, both to the Parliament and to the Canadian people, to have such statements, impugning the sense of honour of the Government and its officers, made on the floor of the House. Members should surely be taught to feel that a serious responsibility attaches to the making of such allegations. As to the main question, that of the constitutional principle involved, there is no doubt room for difference of opinion. One's views on this point will naturally be determined by his prior views in regard to the real source of power in the Confederation. The late Hon. J. H. Gray, in his history of the Debates which preceded Confederation, takes the ground that the Crown was the source of authority in fact as well as in form, and that the powers of the Provincial Legislatures are all derivative, as flowing down to them from this fountain head. Those who take that view will logically hold that the Federal Parliament alone has a right to determine the franchise and the mode of election of its own members. Believing, as we do, on the other hand, that it is in the very nature of a voluntary confederation of self-governing states, that these states are the real fountains of the powers they surrender to the central authority, we cannot avoid the conclusion that on the provinces themselves individually should devolve the right and the responsibility of determining the qualifications and mode of election of their representatives in the general Parliament. The very fact that this principle fails to secure perfect uniformity in the qualifications of voters and in other respects is rather an argument in its favour than the opposite. The circumstances and conditions of the people in one Province differ from those in another. These differences, as determined by age and political development, by educational conditions, by racial derivations, and so forth, may constitute the very best reason why the terms of franchise in one Province should differ from those in another. Certainly the people of the provinces themselves are in the best position to judge in this matter, and it seems an undoubted hardship that those whom the people of a Province themselves declare entitled to vote should in any case be deprived of that title by the voice of the people of other provinces, or *vice versa*. At the same time no one can deny the right of the central Government and Parliament to protect themselves against unfair and partisan legislation or practices on the part of the local authorities. But surely this could be done without the former taking the whole business into their own hands, and not only subjecting the Federal principle to an unnecessary strain, but duplicating at an enormous expense the electoral machinery of the whole Dominion. Sooner or later the Dominion Franchise Act will, we venture to predict, be repealed with the consent of both parties.

EVERY high-minded Canadian must feel personally humiliated on reading the reports of debates and proceedings in the Commons, as they come to hand from morning to morning. The rancour which so often disgraced the hustings has evidently been carried into the House. The best traditions of the British and Canadian Parliaments are in danger of being forgotten. The language and tone in which certain of the leading spirits on either side speak to and of certain of their opponents are too often in deplorable contrast with those in which one gentleman, not to say statesman, might be expected to address another, whose political principles and policy he believes to be unsound and harmful, but to whom he nevertheless is bound to give credit for being as honest and patriotic as himself. It is difficult for an onlooker, however impartial, to say which side is most to blame for a state of feeling which threatens to do away with the courtesies and amenities of public life and convert the House of Commons into a political bear garden. Some of the questions of Opposition leaders have been peculiarly irritating by reason of the insinuations they convey; while the replies of some of the Ministers have been flippant if not arrogant. The accusations and denunciations which have been hurled against Ministers in respect to their alleged unfairness and misrepresentation in the conduct of the campaign, have transgressed all bounds of Parliamentary decorum. On the other hand it seems impossible to deny that the methods and arguments resorted to by the Government were in many respects the opposite of what is fair, not to say chivalrous or honourable political warfare. The manner in which the Minister of Public Works has been badgered and bullied in connection with the pending charge of maladministration, seems little short of a gross violation of one of the first principles of British fair play. On the other hand it is true that the most sympathetic friend of the accused Minister can hardly deny that it was in exceedingly bad taste for him to retain his position at the head of his department during the collection and arrangement of the documents in the custody of that department on which his accuser relies to substantiate his charges. It is certainly unreasonable and unfair to claim that a Minister is bound to resign whenever a charge of malfeasance in office is brought against him. But it is none the less true that a scrupulous delicacy of feeling would under such circumstances prompt most men to hand over the control of documents called for to some other person, with the least possible delay. A case of still greater hardship is that of Mr. Perley. Without attempting to decide the disputed question as to whether such an officer is bound by honour or by custom to resign his office, pending an investigation involving his official integrity, or whether, in the event of his not resigning, it is the duty of the Government to suspend him, we cannot but feel that such an attack as that of which Mr. Perley was the victim, and against which he could not possibly defend himself, was uncalled for, if not unjust and cruel. This will be seen the more clearly when it is remembered that it is, to say the least, quite possible that Mr. Perley is perfectly guiltless, and that it is his very consciousness of innocence that emboldens him to retain his position pending the vindication which he may know is but a question of days or weeks.

HOWEVER we may feel constrained to condemn much that is reprehensible in the language and spirit of some of the leading members of the Opposition, there is one matter of no small importance in respect to which no impartial onlooker can, it seems to us, fail to sympathize to some extent with their indignation. We refer to the part taken in the late campaign by Sir Charles Tupper, and the open avowal by Sir John Macdonald that he himself is responsible for having summoned the Canadian High Commissioner from England to take part as a red hot partisan in the struggle. That the Premier should have thought it unnecessary to attempt any explanation or defence of so extraordinary a course, and even deemed it fitting to congratulate himself upon the success of Sir Charles' canvass in his own constituency, was not calculated to allay the exasperation of his opponents. Can it be that Sir John, or any member or fair-minded supporter of the Government, fails to see that this employment of a public official in a strictly and intensely partisan work was not