

sion that would defeat itself, and that is unworthy of the further consideration of this House.

Mr. McMILLAN. I believe that this Bill, instead of favouring the rich man, would, if passed, be very much to the advantage of the poor man, for this simple reason, that many wealthy men who are the employers of labour, while not daring to compel their men to vote in a particular way, are at present able to influence their votes by compelling them to remain away from the polls if they are likely to cast their votes in opposition to their employers' wishes. Under a system of compulsory voting the poor man would be able to go to the poll, and if he could not conscientiously cast his ballot, he could spoil it. I think such a measure would do away with a great deal of the corruption which exists at the present time, because it would enable a workingman to cast his vote independently, instead of being compelled to remain at home or lose his place if his sympathies were not with those of his employer. I would not be in favour of a fine of \$50, but I would require the deputy returning officer to keep a list of those who did not cast their votes, and send that list to the revising barrister before he finally revised the voters' list; and I would disqualify those persons from voting for a number of years. I think this is a greater measure in the interest of the purity of elections and in the interest of the workingman, than almost any other that could be introduced on this subject.

Mr. SPROULE. I, for one, cannot assent to the principle of this Bill for the following reasons: I believe it is against a man's liberty. It is out of harmony with the freedom of our humanity as exercised in the British dominions. In no line of life, so far as I am aware, whether for candidates or for by-laws, or for anything that may be submitted to the public, is it compulsory on men to vote; and if it has not been found necessary in other cases, why should we think it necessary for the election of members of Parliament? It might be that both candidates would be objectionable to many voters, so that they would prefer remaining at home. But it is contended that if this Bill were made law it would do away with a great deal of corruption. I am informed that in some States where compulsory voting is now in existence, it is not successful in this respect.

Mr. AMYOT. Which State?

Mr. SPROULE. I am not able to give the hon. gentleman the name of the State,—

Mr. AMYOT. I am not aware that it exists anywhere yet.

Mr. SPROULE,—but I will, perhaps, be able to do so at a later stage of this Bill. I speak with some knowledge of the subject, because I was a resident of the States for some time, and I believe that although a measure of this kind was enacted for the purpose of accomplishing what it is supposed this Bill would accomplish, it did not accomplish that purpose; but corruption is just as rife, and election expenses there are greater than in Canada.

Mr. CHARLTON. I do not think such a measure is in existence in any State. It has been suggested, but not tried.

Mr. SPROULE. The hon. gentleman may be giving only his opinion, and I will endeavour to

satisfy him whether I am correct or not. If I am incorrectly informed, I will be pleased to set myself right, but that is the information I have. I think this is too radical a change for this House to assent to. I think it would introduce a new system of corruption which we have not had to contend with hitherto. It would make compulsory what is now a duty, and I do not think we should impose that obligation upon free electors of this country, who at present are free, not only to vote or not for members of this House, but in every other line of life in which they require to record their votes—in municipal elections, elections of school trustees and others. I say the principle of this Bill is out of harmony with the freedom of that system which is now enjoyed.

Mr. HAZEN. I would like to call the attention of the hon. gentleman to another difficulty which exists in some parts of the Dominion, owing to some people being opposed to voting from religious convictions. I understand that is the case with the Mennonites who have settled in the North-West and Manitoba; but the representatives from that section can speak with more authority on that point. I know, however, that, during the course of the canvass in my constituency, I met a number of people who told me they belonged to a denomination of Christians against whose principles it was to vote at all. That being the case, it is clearly useless to force these people to come to the polls, when they have not the slightest intention of voting on reaching there. Should the principle of this Bill be admitted, certainly exemptions should be provided in the case of the people to whom I have referred. The Bill which the hon. gentleman has introduced involves a principle of great importance and worthy of the highest consideration; and the hon. gentleman who introduced it is evidently seized of the old idea that while one man is able to bring a horse to water, ten men cannot force him to drink, for the hon. gentleman is clearly of opinion that though we may by law compel a man to come to the polling booth, yet it would not be right to compel him to vote. The main thing, however, he seems to think, is to get him there, and then let him destroy the ballot paper if he likes. The point made by the junior member for Halifax (Mr. Stairs) was very well taken indeed, namely, that very little can be accomplished in the line contemplated by the mover of this Bill, that is, putting down corruption. As the hon. member for Halifax has pointed out, the law to-day declares that, if a candidate conveys voters to a poll he is liable to disqualification, or if his agents convey them, he is liable to be unseated. Yet I venture to say, that there is not a constituency in the Dominion—certainly not a rural constituency—in which, at the recent elections, voters were not conveyed to the polls in defiance of the law. Now, if the law at present is unavailing to prevent electors being carried to the polls, I would ask the hon. gentleman who introduced this Bill, how it would be possible to successfully carry into effect the principle of his measure, which is to prevent candidates and their friends from conveying electors to the polls? If they break the law which exists to-day, we may be pretty certain that they will violate the one proposed by the hon. gentleman also. I must confess, if the only object of his Bill is to