

friction. Imagine that country adopting a set of machinery for a national franchise, with its revising barristers, its revisions, its lists, its printing of these lists and its distribution of these lists among the 70,000,000 inhabitants of that country. Imagine the confusion that would reign between the list of the nation and the lists of the states. We have had such an experience in this country under this absurd law, and common sense and justice require that this Government should sweep it from the Statute-book at the earliest possible moment.

I do not know that it is necessary to enter with very much greater fulness into the discussion of this question; but I have this to say, that the Dominion franchise law is unique in its character among all the franchise laws in existence.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. The proposed one.

Mr. CHARLTON. The one which it is proposed to sweep away. There is no law in England corresponding to this. In no other British colony is there a franchise law that places it in the power of the Government of the day to make the list, to alter the list, to print the list, to stuff the list and trample on the rights of the people. I repeat that Canada in this respect occupies a unique position, a position so unique that the sooner we get out of it and return to the old system the better. We are not recommending a novel or untried system. We are simply proposing to return to the principle that was in operation longer than the existing franchise law—a system which was in operation from 1867 to 1885, and which gave evidence by its fruits that it was an excellent system and that no possible reason existed for the substitution of the one now in vogue. I hold, therefore, that this Government is not only warranted but is in duty bound to repeal this law.

Now, some question may exist on our own side of the House as to why the course proposed to be taken is advisable. Some of our friends may perhaps entertain the impression that somehow or other, and to a limited extent at least, the Dominion should exercise some degree of supervision in this matter. Such a position is entirely at variance with the position occupied by the Liberal party on this question from the time it was fought in this House for three months. From 1885 down to this moment the Liberal party has always squarely and unequivocally held the position that the franchise law of this Dominion should be the franchise laws of the different provinces. I will read one amendment that was offered in the course of that memorable struggle, which expressed the position of the Liberal party at the outset; and the party has continued to occupy that position down to the present time. The resolution, which was moved on the 3rd of July, 1885, was as follows:—

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Moved by Mr. Charlton :

That the Bill be referred back to the Committee of the Whole, for the purpose of amending the same, so as to provide for leaving with the people the control of the voters' list by officers of their own selection; and for avoiding the useless expense of double machinery for preparing voters' lists, the extra expense contingent upon a Dominion Franchise Bill, and the confusion and annoyance to the people resulting from two distinct methods of preparing and revising voters' lists, by providing that each province shall be allowed to judge of the proper requirements for the exercise of franchise within its own limits (inasmuch as the diversities of conditions in different provinces render it difficult, if not impossible, to fix a uniform franchise for the entire Dominion that will fully meet the conditions and wants of each separate province); and that a uniform franchise for each province, for both provincial and Dominion elections, shall be secured, by providing that the voters' lists used in each province, in the elections of members of the Dominion House of Commons, shall be voters' lists in each province prepared under the laws of such province, and in use for the election of members of the House of Assembly of each such province.

That was the distinct position taken by the Liberal party in July, 1885, as regards the Dominion franchise law and the Liberal party has never in the slightest degree departed from that position. The position was a sound one then, it is a sound one now, and the country calls loudly to be relieved from the incubus that has rested upon it in connection with the operation of this Bill. But four revisions have cost the country more than a million dollars. The Government did not dare have an annual revision of the lists, and we usually held our elections on the old lists. The two last elections were held on lists two years old. In consequence of this great cost, in consequence of the cumbersome nature of the machinery, in consequence of the great inconvenience placed upon the electorate of the country in getting themselves placed upon the lists, in consequence of the cost to members of Parliament and candidates of revising the lists, averaging \$600 or \$700 per riding for each revision, in consequence of all this unnecessary trouble and expenditure to secure a result that would be better secured by a list which costs nothing at all, I hold that the Government are justified in sweeping away this measure and substituting for it the provincial franchises.

Mr. BENNETT. The motion of the hon. member for York (Mr. Foster) is "that the further consideration of this Bill be deferred until the tariff promised by the Government for this session has been disposed of by this House;" and in rising to support that resolution, almost at the outset I congratulate two hon. gentlemen, the hon. member for North Wellington (Mr. McMullen) and the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) on the addresses delivered by them this afternoon. Let me tender, first, my sincere congratulations to