

exhausted themselves in an effort to produce arguments that would justify this House in abolishing the Franchise Act and taking this backward step. It is a retrograde step that is proposed, and one unworthy of a Government that call themselves progressive and Liberal. This is a step in the wrong direction. It is, as has been truthfully stated on this side of the House to-night, an abdication of the functions of this Parliament. We have the power to regulate our own franchise. It is eminently proper that the power should be vested in this Parliament, and still more proper that Parliament should exercise it. For some years the provincial franchises were used. It was inevitable that they should be used because there was no other means available for the preparation of the lists for the first House of Commons of Canada. Year after year the same franchise was adopted; but Sir John Macdonald introduced a Franchise Bill, which was not passed into law but was brought up for the purpose of familiarizing the House and the country with its provisions so that it might be adopted in years to come. That new Franchise Bill was adopted in 1885. There have been many objections made to it, and we all remember the circumstances under which it was passed. The objections that have been made are, in the first place, that it was cumbersome, that it was hard to learn and hard to understand. It was somewhat cumbersome; but that very fault appears to have led to the preparation of a more perfect list than the local list, as I will conclusively prove. The Act as it has been in force provides for every voter getting his name on the list with the lowest possible expense, and least trouble, and to that extent is in direct contrast to the provincial list in Ontario. The object of the Ontario list appears to be to prevent men who are duly qualified from getting their names placed on the list. The expense is as great, the difficulty is as great, as with the Dominion list, and when all this trouble has been undertaken, you have not in the case of the provincial list got even a nearly perfect list. It is stated as an objection that an immense list is prepared under the Dominion Franchise Act. The hon. member for Kingston (Mr. Britton) said it looked like a stuffed list. The hon. gentleman was forced, however, to admit that the revising officer was an eminently fair one. Hon. gentlemen opposite are obliged to make this admission because these officers in nine cases out of ten are judges of the land. They perform judicial functions and are the judges of last resort in regard to provincial lists. The only class of men who are entirely removed from the political arena are these men who were made revising officers for the Dominion lists. Yet we have been told—we have not been told to-night, because hon. gentlemen opposite dare not make the statement—that they have acted

unfairly. Although hon. gentlemen opposite have been endeavouring to create that impression throughout the country, they have completely failed. They now say that they have nothing to say against the revising officer, but that there is the revising officer's clerk, a very wicked individual, according to the hon. member for West Elgin. I only know the revising officer's clerk in my own riding. He is the judge's son, a barrister, and an eminently fair man against whom nothing could be said by either side as regards his impartiality and his care in preparing the lists and complying with the law. This charge against some of the revising officers' clerks was untrue and it has been urged for the first time to-night; and no proof has been given in support of it, any more than proof has been given of the unfairness of the revising officers who are principally judges of the land. Then we are told that the Act was expensive. Perhaps so. There are two expenses to be considered: one is the expense to the Government, and the other is the expense to the individual candidate. I presume we are more interested in the latter. We have a very general interest in the expense to the country, but we have a special interest in the expense to the candidate who causes a revision of the list, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is more expensive in the case of the local lists than in the case of the lists under the Dominion Franchise Act. Take my own constituency as regards the local legislature. The Mowat Government gerrymandered it twice in order to make it a safe constituency, if they could. It is not nearly so large as the constituency for Dominion purposes, and the population is not more than half; yet for one-half of this Dominion constituency the local candidates, Mr. St. John and Mr. Hill, have been put to more trouble and expense in revising the lists than in revising the Dominion list for the larger constituency, and yet they did not secure nearly as perfect a list. The provincial list is essentially an imperfect list. In the township of Vaughan, where I live, there were on our side, I think, about 100 appeals put in; but though the court was held for a day or two, it was difficult to get the people to attend from so large a township and remain there until they gave evidence necessary to have their names put on the list. The result, both on the Reform and Conservative side, was that men did not appear to have their names put on the list, because the evidence was not sufficient to satisfy the judge, who desired conclusive evidence; and, therefore, although there was a good deal of expense incurred and a good deal of trouble taken, a very imperfect list was obtained. A large number of names of those entitled to vote were not put on the list, notwithstanding the expense and trouble taken, whereas our Dominion list was more perfect and less expensive. Under the Dominion Act a man