

bec was in the hands of the Conservative party. It had been in the hands of the Conservative party ever since confederation, with the exception of two years. But I would not have hesitated to accept the franchise provided by a Conservative legislature in Quebec, because, though there were many things in that franchise, on the whole, to which I would have objected, still as it satisfied the province it would have satisfied me. It is in the same way as regards other provinces. It is possible that the control of the several provinces may pass into the hands of the Conservative party, still on a question of this kind. I am quite disposed, for my part, to accept the franchise prepared by the legislature, whether Liberal or Conservative. But, if the day comes when a fraud is committed against this Parliament, when legislation of a hostile character is brought forward in the legislatures, then it will be always open for this Parliament to resume its own powers, and to enact a franchise law of its own.

Mr. McNEILL. After the mischief has been done.

The PRIME MINISTER. Before the mischief has been done; before the general elections take place.

Mr. McNEILL. Not necessarily.

The PRIME MINISTER. My hon. friend will have the right of legislating at all times before a general election, and if it is found there has been fraudulent legislation against the Parliament here, then we have always the power to remedy the evil.

Mr. INGRAM. May I ask the right hon. gentleman a question? Suppose a local election takes place and the legislature meets and passes an Act affecting the representation in this Parliament, and the Dominion Parliament has dissolved and gone to the people, how are you going to remedy that?

The PRIME MINISTER. That is too thin altogether.

Mr. INGRAM. No.

The PRIME MINISTER. My hon. friend (Mr. Ingram) knows very well that if a dissolution of this Parliament takes place we will know by that time what are the lists that are in force, and the elections will take place upon the lists that are in force at the time of dissolution, though they should be afterwards altered. That is the law. Now, Mr. Chairman, I would ask our friends on the other side of the House to approach this question in a fair and judicial spirit. We have had two systems of franchise on trial in this country. We had the provincial franchise which lasted for nineteen years, and we have had a Dominion system of franchise which lasted for twelve years. The last system has not given satisfaction, even according to those who were the au-

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thors of the Act. I ask them to give a new trial to the other system, and if after giving it a new trial—and I am bound to repeat once more that the question is not free from difficulties—they find that the new system does not work any better than the old, then we will have to devote ourselves to the task of framing a better system. I want to ask another question. Do gentlemen on the other side pretend that there must absolutely be a franchise for the provincial Parliaments, and a franchise for the Dominion Parliament? Would it not be far better, as a matter simply of good government, if the elections to this House could be conducted on the local lists, and that the members of this Parliament and the members of the legislature who represent the same body of people, should be elected by the same electors? Is it not better that it should be so? Then, I say, that this system which has been proposed should not be condemned in advance, but a trial should be given to it.

Mr. DAVIN. The right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) in reply to the argument of the ex-Minister of Finance taunted him and his party with disfranchising electors, and when my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) said: How did we disfranchise electors? The right hon. gentleman answered: You did it in British Columbia. Why, Sir, the right hon. gentleman is as far astray in his facts as he is in his constitutional law, as I will presently show. The Franchise Act of 1885, section 9, reads as follows:—

In the provinces of British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, besides the persons entitled to be registered as voters and to vote under the foregoing provisions of this Act, every person who at the time of the passing of the same—

(1) Is of the age of twenty-one years and is not by this Act or by any law of the Dominion of Canada disqualified or prevented from voting; and

(2) Is a British subject by birth or naturalization and resident in the province, and is entitled to vote in the said provinces respectively by the laws now severally existing in the same,—

Shall have a right to be registered as a voter and to vote so long as he shall continue to be qualified to vote under the provisions of the said last mentioned laws and no longer.

Mr. FOSTER. When the right hon. gentleman made that statement with reference to British Columbia, and charged it on this side of the House, and when I asked him whether he had not better read up the law, will the right hon. gentleman now acknowledge that he made a mistake or will he not?

The PRIME MINISTER. I will answer by and by.

Mr. FOSTER. When it is pointed out to you directly, right in your face—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order.

Mr. FOSTER. The right hon. gentleman is not ready to admit it.