

times he merits my admiration and astonishment.

Mr. HUGHES. And sometimes you are surprised.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. I am surprised, but I do submit to the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) that in discussing a Bill of the importance of this, he might at least possess himself of an elementary knowledge of the Bill itself. I am not asking too much when I ask that. I do not ask for a lawyer's acquaintance with the different details of the Bill; I simply ask that he would possess himself of some little elementary knowledge of what the Bill is about. Why, Sir, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) called upon his followers to fight this Bill line by line and section by section; and why? Because he said: It is a contentious Bill, and being a contentious Bill, it should not be introduced this session, and may not be required for four or five years. And the hon. gentleman, with that superior wave of the hand which he sometimes adopts, gave as his reason that it is a contentious Bill, and stated in the most solemn tones: It proposes to hand over to some other power the delimitation or the fixing of the boundaries of the electoral districts. Now, did every anybody hear anything so ridiculous or absurd. There is not a line, not a phrase in this Bill which would justify any such statement. He evoked it from his own inner consciousness; he built up this bogey for the pure purpose of frightening his followers into line. I do not believe that the hon. gentleman could have read the Bill. But somebody may say to me: you cannot be representing him correctly. Well, Sir, when I heard him at first I thought it was a 'lapsus linguae,' but when he enforced the argument through sentence after sentence, I thought the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) was in the position he very often is, of not knowing what he was talking about, and covering his argument up in a great cloud of words. What did the hon. gentleman say?

The principles of that Bill, if I understand it rightly, propose to take our constituencies and the power of forming these constituencies from the gentlemen who sit here as a Dominion legislature, and hand it over to the provincial legislatures.

Did ever anybody hear anything so ridiculous? There is not a line in the Bill which would justify such a statement. It is pure imagination, wild and reckless imagination, absolute and utter disregard of facts, and indifference to accuracy which the hon. gentleman, as I say, is a past master in. He says further:

It also gives to a power entirely out of our own control the right to say what shall be the boundaries of the constituencies of gentlemen who sit in this House.

Mr. DAVIES.

Mr. CASEY. Did he say that?

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. Yes, he did. There is the "Hansard," page 776, and the hon. gentleman is as agile and as slippery at getting out of a key-hole as anybody in the world, but out of that he cannot get; it is there in the "Hansard."

I ask hon. gentlemen sitting behind my hon. friend (Mr. Foster), who have been accustomed to take their political gospel from him, and who have been used to form their opinions upon serious statements made by him in debate, how can any one of them follow him after the exposure that has been made of the ridiculous reasons he gave as to why this Bill was contentious. When one shows that the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) was entirely mistaken, when one shows that not only one of the dire predictions he made could be fulfilled, because they have no basis in fact, where is the hon. gentleman's argument gone, that this is a contentious Bill. I have shown that this principle is the principle accepted by both political parties. I have shown that the only real and tangible reason which the hon. gentleman put forward why this Bill should be opposed has no existence except in his own fertile imagination; and, having done so, I think I may fairly appeal to the House that, so far as the arguments of the hon. gentleman stand, there is no reason why it should not receive its second reading. I acknowledge that if this Bill were a gerrymander, as the hon. gentleman wanted his followers to believe—if it gave an outside party power to tamper with the boundaries of our constituencies, every man on both sides of the House should rise up in rebellion against it. We have had enough gerrymander Bills in this House. The Liberal party in the great province of Ontario have suffered for eighteen years, aye, nearly twenty years, from the curse of an infamous gerrymander; and a repetition of that gerrymander was introduced here a year or two ago with the hope of legislating me out of this chamber, but it miserably failed, I am glad to say. The Liberal party do not propose to follow in those steps. The Liberal party present a Bill to this House which, though it has its defects, I acknowledge, is based on a principle which has been accepted by both parties, and accepted in a way which, when crystallized in a Bill, ought to insure the passage of that Bill through the House without any factious or contentious opposition.

Now, the argument was used against the Government of the day that we are seeking by this Bill to gain political advantages. How absurd that argument is. Why, we gain no political advantages from this Bill. It takes away from the party in power the political advantages which the present law gives them. To-day, Sir, we could appoint a revising officer of our own in every one of the 215 electoral districts of this Domin-