

Act (Statutes 1917), An Act to Confer the Electoral Franchise upon Women (Statutes 1918), An Act to amend Chapter Thirty-nine of the Statutes of 1917 (Statutes 1918), An Act respecting the Election held in the Electoral District of Yukon, 1918 (Statutes 1918), the Dominion By-Election Act, 1919, and An Act to amend the Dominion By-Election Act, 1919 (Statutes 1919, 2nd Session). The Government, by this legislation, proposes to clean the slate of all these measures. I congratulate the Government upon giving evidence of its desire to clean the slate entirely of legislation which, to use the expressive language of my hon. friend the member for Halifax (Mr. Maclean), a former member of the Administration, constitutes a blot upon our national career. We cannot but be too glad that this stain is to be wiped off the records of this Parliament in so far as that can be done by legislative enactment.

So far as this Act is symbolical of the Government's intention to wipe out their own iniquities, to forget the past, and forgive, as well as to forget, we congratulate them upon the decision they are taking, and we heartily offer to unite with them in an endeavour to put upon the Statutes in the place of the legislation they are removing, an Act which, as my hon. friend has said, may be a model to the whole of Canada. I am prepared, Mr. Speaker, to believe that the purpose of the Government in effacing the legislation to which I have referred and bringing a fresh Bill before Parliament, is to do what they can in this post-war period, through the medium of this legislation, to unite the people of this country in good-will and good works as respect matters pertaining to the work of Parliament and the Government of the country. In that spirit we are only too happy to join in rendering whatever assistance we can from this side of the House to perfect the Act in every particular.

That leads me to speak of the attitude of the Opposition in regard to the second reading of this Bill. So far as any principle involved in this legislation is concerned, it can only be that of the desirability of having a Franchise Act which will be definite, known, just and fair. To that principle we can take no exception; it has our hearty endorsement, and we shall be only too glad to see the Government proceed with all the expedition possible, not only to get such legislation on the Statutes, but also to give the people of the country an opportunity to express their will under its provisions and have returned a Parliament which will be truly representative.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that while we acquiesce heartily in the principle of the Bill in so far as it means a new franchise, there are in the measure itself many provisions which we should like to see modified; and when it reaches the committee stage we on this side of the House will offer amendments or suggestions in regard to some of the sections, and we trust that when the Government hears what is to be said from the point of view we shall then put forward they will see the wisdom of amending the Bill accordingly.

My hon. friend in introducing this measure outlined its main provisions, and in his address to-day he repeated the outline in much the same form. I will take up what he said, just in a few words, and refer to the main features of the Bill.

Let me take the features of the Bill as my hon. friend has stated them. He points out, in the first place, that the purpose of the Bill is to fix a uniform franchise throughout the Dominion. With that purpose we are in entire accord. In the second place, it is proposed to provide a uniform method for the preparation of voters' lists. As to the provision of a uniform method, that depends in large measure upon just what the particular method is for which the Government desires uniformity. I think there is room for improvement in the Bill in that particular. In the third place, it aims to provide a simple and satisfactory method for the conduct of elections. We all wish to see a simple and satisfactory method provided as soon as possible, and there can be no question that any means that will achieve that end is eminently desirable.

The franchise, my hon. friend says, is to be established upon very broad principles. The only requirements in regard to qualifications will be, he informs us, those of British citizenship, residence in Canada for one year, and in the particular constituency for two months, and attainment of the age of twenty-one years; these requirements to apply in the cases of male and female voters alike. Now, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be fairer than that, and all that we ask, as respects the qualifications there set out, is that the Government shall not profess one thing and do another; that it shall not give with one hand and withhold with the other as respects the provisions of this enactment, or its relation to any other statutes which have been enacted in the past or which may be enacted in the future by this Parliament. It was for that reason