

House when in office accomplished with marvelous success.

I am not going to follow the hon. gentleman through his three hours' speech on the trade question and various other questions; I am going to deal with the Bill introduced by the Solicitor General to repeal what some people call an infamous Act, and with the principles involved in the Bill the Solicitor General has submitted and for which he asks the sanction of Parliament. The hon. gentleman says it is a trivial and unimportant Bill, one of no consequence. The Tories did not think a Bill relating to the franchise in 1885 was a trivial and unimportant Bill. The leader of the Government at that time did not say exactly that he was prepared to shed the last drop of his blood and die in his tracks for the Bill, but he and his followers fought for the Bill, and those members who were in the House at that day are well aware that day in and day out for over one week, with no adjournment except for dinner, the House continued to sit for the purpose of pressing this Bill through. By numerical strength and force they pushed it through the House. I agree with the view frequently expressed that a worse Bill, a more scandalous Bill, a more infamous Bill never was placed on the records of Parliament than the Franchise Bill of 1885. Sir, that Bill admittedly was not introduced in the interest of the public, surely it was not introduced in the interest of the Liberal party, or in the interest of the great mass of the people. Pray in whose interest was it introduced? It was introduced into this Parliament, it was discussed, it was forced through for the purpose of advancing the interests of the Tory party. And it did so. For twelve years, by virtue of the Franchise Act and by virtue of the still more infamous gerrymander Act, hon. gentlemen opposite were able to return to Parliament after the general elections with a majority behind them. I believe now, however, that the good sense of the Canadian people is so strong and determined that not even the Franchise Act or the Gerrymander Act could restore hon. gentlemen opposite to the Treasury benches. Sir, that law was uncalled for, nobody asked for it, there were no petitions presented to Parliament in favour of it. On the contrary, if my memory serves me, there were petitions presented against it, at all events, there were many and strong remonstrances made against the passing of that Bill. It was not called for, it was not required, and before its passage we acted under a law practically the same as the Solicitor General has now introduced. Did the hon. gentleman (Sir Charles Tupper) ever complain of the old franchise system? Was there a man in Parliament who ever complained of any injustice or wrong being done under it? No, Sir, every one was satisfied. We heard nothing in those days of a want of dignity in the Parliament of Can-

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ada adopting the local Franchise Acts, and using the local lists. Everybody was satisfied, until the tempter in an evil hour seduced from their allegiance to the country the Ministers who then occupied the Treasury benches, and pawned off this so-called Franchise Bill on the country. We were told then, that the Bill was introduced in the interests of the country, but we knew it was intended for the purely political purpose of obtaining an undue and illegitimate advantage over the Liberal party. Nobody knows that better than the hon. gentleman who now leads the Opposition. Sir, the honest sentiment of the country in 1885 was opposed to that Bill. The honest sentiment of the country has been opposed to it from that day until this hour, and the honest sentiment of the country will be opposed to it until the Bill of my hon. friend the Solicitor General becomes the law of the land. The Conservative members of this House well know the iniquities of the present franchise law. They know the hardships of it, and the difficulties of working it, and in their calmer moments they admit that the statements which I now make are correct. The experience of twelve years of that law has from, day to day, intensified the feeling in my province against it. It was ostensibly introduced by the then First Minister in the interests of the public, and Sir John Macdonald declared that the principle of the Bill was that the franchise should be uniform throughout the Dominion. He said:

A system of representation applicable to all the provinces was a necessity.

And he further declared:

That the same class should be represented in every province, that the same franchise should be applicable to all the provinces, that the same interests should be represented in all the provinces.

Well, Sir, after we discussed that Bill for weeks and weeks together, the principle upon which it was based at its inception was abandoned by the First Minister, and the franchise was not made uniform throughout Canada. We have not the same classes represented in all the provinces; we have not the same interests represented in all the provinces. Ontario and Prince Edward Island have a different franchise, Quebec and British Columbia have a different franchise, Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia have all different franchises, and hardly two of the provinces of which this Dominion is composed have the same franchise under the existing law. In my judgment it is time that this Act should be repealed, and its worst features eliminated from the Statute-book.

Sir, the reasons for the passage of the present law never existed, and they never will exist, and the Act has produced grave injustice to the Liberal party in the province of Ontario, and no doubt throughout