

could absolutely compel the local officials to discharge the duties which this legislation imposed upon them. We were thus exposed to the monstrous absurdity of not being able to hold an election in the province of Manitoba for a whole year. On more than one occasion when the government of the day were inclined to take a plunge and appeal to the electorate, they found they had no law under which they could do so, and that if they attempted it they would make confusion worse confounded. It is too late, I suppose, to make an appeal to gentlemen opposite to reconsider this policy, but it is, perhaps, well to point out the unwisdom of the course they adopted, and to suggest to them that the sooner this House of Commons of Canada is in a position to have an independent franchise of its own, the better it will be for the credit and the character of this country. In view of all that has come to light recently, in view of the reports which have flooded the press of the country, the prominent feature of this Franchise Bill ought to be a provision for the purpose of taking every means to secure the purity and independence of elections. In my judgment, offences which formerly were punished with a fine should be made punishable by severe imprisonment without the option of a fine. I say that those who violate and bring into contempt the election law of the land, and who undertake to steal elections from the honest electors, should be in the penitentiary instead of being free men. I hope that by the common consent of the members of this House, before the Bill leaves the Chamber it will be so amended as to inflict most condign punishment upon any man who undertakes to indulge in these fraudulent and frightful malpractices which have so disgraced this country, and have made the fair name of Canada almost a by-word with regard to elections. I trust that the Bill will be amended by common consent that it will be made impossible for any man to be bribed to stoop so low as to commit an outrage on the freedom of our honest electors. I trust that the free men of Canada will be able in the future to feel that it is worth their while to exert themselves in the interests of their country, without the fear that when the poll is closed the election may be stolen from the candidate of the people's choice, and that the man who is the patron—or, if not the patron, the person to be benefited by the acts of a band of ruffians—may be returned to this House. I trust that every stringent provision possible will be adopted to prevent the repetition of these malpractices which have become so common and notorious as to compel the Prime Minister to declare that nothing short of the immediate appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate and prevent these things, if possible, should be sanctioned by this parliament. It will be more convenient to dis-

Sir CHARLES TUPPER.

cuss these matters in committee, but I wished before you left the Chair, Mr. Speaker, to say that which I believe is the sentiment predominating in the mind of every man of independent character—and I hope that includes every gentleman on both sides of this House—viz., that full and complete effect shall be given to the will of the people, and that no measure, however severe, will be left untried to bring about that result.

Sir ADOLPHE CARON. I should like to ask the Solicitor General if he has any reason for changing the present ballot paper. In my experience in elections, this ballot was an improvement on the last, and, on the whole, gave satisfaction. I do not see any improvement, far from it, in the ballot which appears as the model ballot in this Bill. I am afraid the hon. gentleman is restoring the objections which we found in the ballot which was used before the disc was introduced.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. The hon. leader of the opposition appears to have not quite understood that we are now dealing with the Election Act and not the Franchise Act. The Franchise Act, as we now have it, by which we adopt the provincial franchise in federal elections, is merely a return to the condition of things that existed from confederation down to 1885. The change made in 1898 is not to my mind responsible for such a condition of things as the hon. gentleman states exists in Winnipeg. There is no reason why, under the Franchise Act as we have it, any electoral division in Canada should be unrepresented for one year. Section 9 of the Franchise Act provides for the very difficulty pointed out by the hon. gentleman.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. Will the hon. gentleman explain, then, why the government which he represents so ably as a law officer of the Crown, should have left the constituency of Winnipeg unrepresented for a year?

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. As I understand it, the reason the Winnipeg election was delayed was that it would take two or three months to prepare the lists, whereas, as a provincial election was then impending we would have the benefit of the provincial lists as prepared for the provincial election. Under the federal Franchise Act which we had before, the hon. gentleman knows that elections have been held on lists four years old. Surely that condition of things was not to be tolerated or continued if any change for the better could possibly be invented. The hon. leader of the opposition is very keen about the necessity of providing machinery to prevent corruption in elections. In my judgment, an election Act is one that should appeal very strongly to every member of the House of Commons, because it is a matter that