

"Free Press," a paper supporting the present Government, has the following statement with regard to this measure:—

"The new franchise law," says the Toronto "Globe," "means that we are done with stuffed voters' lists." On the contrary, it means that in Manitoba, at least, we are to have, for the first time, stuffed voters' lists for use in Dominion elections. The "Free Press" does not presume to speak of the lists elsewhere than in this province; the laws under which they are made may be the best, and they may be honestly compiled. The "Globe" may speak for Ontario, and other papers for other provinces; for the present we do not presume to go outside of Manitoba. Here, too, they may be honestly compiled, but that is in spite of the law, which distinctly permits dishonesty. It is some years now since the "Globe" took the trouble to learn enough about the Manitoba Election Act to declare that it was bad, and that it would hinder the reform of the Dominion law by putting a weapon of defence in the hands of the Tories. These were not its exact words, but they convey its exact meaning. It may have forgotten in the intervening years what it then knew, and we shall take the liberty briefly to recall to its recollection the salient features of the Manitoba law.

It provides that lists shall be compiled by registration clerks appointed by the government. These are not barristers of repute in their profession or of standing in the community, as provided by the Dominion Act which is now being repealed because it is thought to be so objectionable. They may be any persons whom the government choose to appoint, and as a matter of fact, have been for the most part active workers of the party to whom the pay of a registration clerk is a consideration. They have no public or professional reputation to sustain, and are, therefore, all the freer, in earning their money, to earn also the gratitude of their employers. We need not go beyond this to convict the law of all the badness charged against it. It has long been a Liberal principle that the making of the voters' lists should be free of government control, and an excellent principle it is. In passing the Dominion franchise law, the Conservatives, no doubt, calculated to reap party advantage by means of the control exercised through the revising barristers, and, holding the view they did, the Liberals were quite right in denouncing the Act. But the control was insignificant in comparison with the control reserved by the Government of Manitoba. As a matter of fact, there were few complaints made against the revising barristers, which shows their work was fairly well performed. Perhaps this has been largely due to the checks provided by courts of revision and appeals to judges. Here the registration clerks are at liberty to compile the lists in any manner they choose, free of restraint or constraint. The "Globe" may form a shrewd conception of the results produced, if it will carefully bear in mind the general character of those registration clerks.

I invite the attention of hon. gentlemen opposite to that as coming from one of their own newspapers, the Winnipeg "Free Press," which is not likely to overstate the case; and that confirms in the fullest and clearest manner the authentic statements which I have read as having been made in the legislature of Manitoba.

Now, I have already said that manhood suffrage is enjoyed in a large portion of

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the Dominion, and I think it is well worthy of the attention of hon. gentlemen opposite, even at this late period, whether it would not be infinitely better to adopt the principle of manhood suffrage throughout the Dominion. I am sure there is no person who wishes to see our elections carried on in a proper and suitable manner, and the members of a great parliament like this elected on a common principle and placed on a common footing relatively to each other, who would not a thousand times prefer a Bill providing for manhood suffrage to the measure now before us—a measure open to such serious objections that it renders confusion worse confounded. I believe that if the public sentiment of this country were taken, it would be found greatly to prefer a simple manhood suffrage, guarded by residence and a proper system of registration. I may say that in 1859 manhood suffrage was the law in Nova Scotia. I will read the principal clauses of that law as they are very short:

All natural-born and naturalized subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, having been, and being, domiciled as hereinafter limited, and being males over the age of twenty-one years, shall be entitled to vote for members to serve in general assembly, that is to say, provided they shall at the time of voting have had their usual place of abode for at least year next before voting in the counties for which they shall vote for county members, and in the townships for which they shall vote for township members; and provided also, that such naturalized subjects so voting, and such natural-born subjects as were not born in Nova Scotia, shall, in addition, have resided in the province for at least five years next before voting; and provided also, that persons voting on residence shall only be entitled to vote in the electoral districts in which they reside at the time of voting, and which district must be in the counties and townships respectively for representing which the candidates are to be elected at that election; and no person who shall have received aid as a pauper under any poor law in this province, or aid as poor persons from any public grant of government money within one year before the day of polling, nor any Indian, shall be entitled to vote on residence.

It will be seen that there was not only manhood suffrage, but one man one vote; and I think I may say that the legislature of Nova Scotia at that time held as high a character for the ability and independence of its members as it has ever done in any period of its history. As I said on a former occasion, there is no country in the world to which, in my judgment, manhood suffrage could be entrusted with greater propriety than to Canada. Every gentleman who is acquainted with the mass of the people of this Dominion knows perfectly well that for intelligence and independence, no electorate could be found anywhere that would surpass that of Canada. I have said on a former occasion that manhood suffrage in the Dominion of Canada would be a much higher franchise than the franchise that exists to-day in the United Kingdom