

House said that he was going to give the Provinces a more perfect law, that he was going to pass a Dominion law, that he was going to take the whole power into his own hands, and was going to give the municipalities something to say in the matter. He would appoint one commissioner, the county judge should be another, and he would allow the municipalities to appoint their warden as the third. I ask why is he not disposed to act in the same fair way in reference to the election law? He controls two points out of the three at present—why is he not satisfied? He controls the right to adjust the constituencies; he can gerrymander them into any shape he chooses; he can say what number of population they shall contain; he fixes them to suit himself. The only power held by the municipalities now is the power of saying what certain percentage of the people shall vote; they only hold the power, under the assessment law, to put on the list those who shall exercise the franchise. The hon. gentleman is going to take that power from them. Why is he not disposed to be as fair in this case as he was in the other? I suppose it does not suit his purpose; he would not be able to carry out the measure if he did. Hon. gentlemen opposite want to control the whole thing; they want to shape the constituencies to suit themselves. And in addition to that, they want to have a revising officer to whom all the inhabitants of that constituency must bow, to whom all must bow who will be given the privilege and right to exercise the franchise. I think if hon. gentlemen opposite were in our position they would resent that law as keenly and as bitterly as we do. I am informed, and I believe rightly informed, that the hon. the First Minister stated his own private opinion in regard to the Gerrymandering Act after that Act became law, and his opinion was that if he had been a member of the Opposition, he would have fought it to the death before he would allow it to pass. I believe hon. gentlemen opposite would have made a much more determined opposition to it than perhaps our friends did, and if there is any one thing to-day that tells against the members of the Reform party, who then occupied the Opposition benches, it is that they permitted this Gerrymandering Bill to become law without a thorough exposure of the system it was intended to operate. There are some peculiarities in connection with the Act to which I wish to call attention. In the first place, if a man is living upon a farm and has sons, his sons will be permitted to vote provided the real estate is assessed at a sufficient value to enable them to vote; but if the value fixed by any revising officer is not sufficient, the farmer's sons will not be allowed any consideration for any chattel property they may be possessed of. That is unfair. In the case of the fishermen, they are allowed to vote upon such property, while the farmers' sons are not, though, in many cases, there are farmers who live upon small farms and do not rely altogether on the produce of the soil for their yearly subsistence, but engage to a considerable extent, in stock raising. Under the operation of this proposed Act, if the farm is poor enough, or the improvements on it insufficient enough to furnish the revising officer with the slightest excuse for reducing the value, these people, no matter what chattel property they may possess, will not be allowed to be assessed upon that. If chattel property is to be taken into consideration in the case of the fisherman, it should also be taken into consideration in the case of small farmers. I hold it is an impossibility to frame a law of this kind that will equitably and fairly reach all the inhabitants of the Dominion, because a man may be earning perhaps \$250 at a certain point, when a man with equal facilities and business, at another point, would only earn \$150. A horse in one place will be worth \$100 more than the same animal would in another, and a farm at one point, say of 20 acres, would be worth four times as much as a similar farm at another.

So long as this diversity of values exist to the extent it does exist at present, it is an utter impossibility to make an equitable and a just franchise law based upon property. In one of the Maritime Provinces, where manhood suffrage has been in force for some time, it will be impossible to frame a law such as this, a law applying to the whole Dominion, that will enable the people there to continue enjoying the rights they now possess, and the consequence would be that a large number of these people, who, under this measure, will be excluded from the franchise, will undoubtedly feel keenly their exclusion and deeply resent it. There is another point to be considered in connection with the powers that are to be invested in the revising officer. He has not only the power to make a revaluation of the property, but to reorganise all the wards in a township if he chooses. In my own riding there are townships in which the wards are divided in such a way that one ward gives a majority of Reform votes and another an almost equal majority of Conservative votes, so that when the polls are closed and the votes counted the one about balances the other. The Reform portion of the riding is situated in the north end and the Conservative in the south end. If the revising officer, for any particular reasons of his own, should decide that the township is wrongly divided, he would make up his mind to divide it in another way, say north and south, instead of as it is, east and west, and thus compel all the farmers in the north portion to travel 10 or 12 miles to the south portion to record their votes, giving, by this means, the Conservative portion an opportunity of recording the votes of its electors at their own doors while the Reformers would have to travel 10 or 12 miles to do so. Many people would of course say: Has not the revising officer the power to do as he pleases? Has he not the right to decide how the township should be divided? And attempt to justify his action by the authority hon. gentlemen opposite are prepared to give him. One poll may be held on one side of the road and another opposite, and the Reformers who live in one end of the townships, will be put to the trouble of going all the way to the other end to vote. No doubt, hon. gentlemen will say that is drawing the line too severely, that no man will be found who will act so unjustly, but the thing has been done before. Our experience has taught us some very queer lessons. We have known such things to happen when the control of the election was perhaps in the hands of those who were willing to lend themselves to a trick of that kind; and such things having happened before, they will, in all probability, under the present rule occur again. It is a dangerous power to place in the hands of any one man. It is an infringement on the rights of the electors to say they must submit to the decision of one man appointed by the Government as to whether they shall have the right to vote or not. It is unfair when we have exercised the rights which we have as Canadians, it is untrue to the principles of British legislation to place such enormous power in the hands of one man to worry and annoy the electors. It is trampling upon the people's rights and taking an undue advantage of them. It is wrong, because we are here to do the country's business, to place a law upon the Statute Book which will deal unjustly with the people who sent us here. The liberties of the people are dear to them, and any attempt to trample upon those liberties ought to be, and I hope will be, resented. The yeomanry and the laboring classes of this country have worked hard to gain the little comforts they enjoy, and, if you are going to place over them a man who will have the right to deprive them or their sons or their relatives of the right to go to the poll untrammelled and record their votes for any man they choose, you are interfering with those rights which they have enjoyed in the past under their municipal institutions and are doing them an injustice which I hope they will resent. The power which is placed in the