

before his death, introduced, or foreshadowed, a measure very much on the principle of the present Bill.

Mr. DAVIN. Not at all.

Mr. POUPORE. Perhaps not. Still the abolition of the Franchise Act was the end aimed at.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No.

Mr. POUPORE. Or a modification, if you will. It was, at all events, a complete modification of the existing Franchise Act. That hon. gentleman, whose opinion was regarded by both sides of the House as of considerable weight, saw that the franchise law for the Dominion was not a success. If some five or six years ago, he saw that the Franchise Act of 1885 was not working properly, that it costs this country too much, that it was time a change was made, do you not think, Sir, that this Government is going outside its duty when introducing a Bill to repeal the Franchise Act and give us what I hope will be an improvement on that measure. If the responsibility rested with the Opposition for the introduction of this Franchise Bill, I would say that we would require to exert ourselves and see that we brought in a good and proper Bill, but when we find that the Government has introduced a Bill, our duty is to try and make that as good as we can from our standpoint and let the Government assume the responsibility for the measure when passed.

I do not propose to detain the House longer. I simply rose to explain my position on this Bill. I am not certain whether an amendment is to be proposed or not; but if there should be one, I would be sorry because, as I have already said, I promised in my county on every occasion, and more particularly on nomination, that I would vote for the repeal of the Franchise Act on the very first occasion that presented itself and as this is the first occasion I wish to inform the House that I shall vote for the Bill.

Mr. ROGERS. It is not necessary for me to say very much on this subject because it is quite evident that, in the opinion, of the great majority of the people, the present Franchise law is expensive, cumbersome and impracticable. The hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Clancy) complained that there had been no protests against the present law and no petition for a change. It seems to me that a stronger protest from the great body of the farmers of Ontario we could not have than in the platform laid down in 1891 by the Patrons of Industry, one of the principal planks of which was the repeal of the present Act. I have never heard of that plank being opposed at any public meeting, and as the platform I have mentioned was subscribed to by 300,000 to 400,000 farmers of Ontario, that constitutes a very practical protest against the continuance of this Act.

I do not pretend to approve of all the features of the Ontario franchise law. I do not believe in its method of registration, nor do I believe in the principle of manhood suffrage. I cannot find any sound, substantial reason in favour of universal or manhood suffrage, especially in view of the fact that every man in the country to-day who takes an interest in public affairs, ought certainly to be able to become possessed of the qualifications required. I know that a great many support that principle on the ground of economy, but it seems to me that if we adopt it, we may be paying too dear for our whistle and be acting on the principle of penny wise and pound foolish. However, as the prevailing sentiment of the people seems to agree in that direction, I suppose we shall have to submit to it. As I have said, both in Ontario and Quebec the qualifications required for the possession of the franchise are so low as really to make the franchise practically universal suffrage—the qualifications consisting in the payment of a small rental of \$20 or the earning of an annual salary of \$300. Surely any man who takes any interest in the country at all can qualify himself to that extent. The system of registration in Ontario has been denounced, and properly so, by many, and I do hope at some future day to see it repealed. I know that many supporters of that Government have expressed their dissatisfaction with it and their desire for its appeal.

In the framing of the lists our great object should be, as the late Minister of Justice stated, to have them controlled by non-partisan officials. In my opinion the municipal officers, as a rule, throughout the province of Ontario at least, are non-partisan and best qualified to say who should and who should not be on the voters' lists. There should be no unfair play tolerated on either side, and I am proud to say that at present there is very much less of that bitter partisan spirit among the farmers than used to exist. I claim, and I think I may claim fairly, that to the Patrons of Industry, more than to any other organization, is due the growth of that feeling and the instilling into the people a greater spirit of independence and non-partisanship and consequently greater clearness and calmness of judgment as to what measures and policies are in the best interests of the country. The people look at things in a broader and more philosophic spirit than they did in the past, and therefore we are entitled to put more confidence in the impartial preparation of the voters' lists by the municipal officers.

In my opinion there is another step forward which we might well take. It is one which I have advocated frequently in private, but which has not yet taken any firm hold on the public. In fact I do not know of its having been brought before any governing body before, except on one occasion, when it was mentioned in the Ontario legis-