

up all over the country which the people themselves are using as pulpits from which to pour their contempt upon Parliament, when in times such as these every arm in the land should be sympathetically outstretched towards Parliament in an effort to promote the great work of reconstruction which is so much needed.

Speaking on the subject of the franchise perhaps I might at this moment say a word in reference to the Government's promise in the speech from the Throne to bring in a new Franchise Bill. It is unfortunate for the country that the Bill referred to will owe its origin in part to some whose names have been associated with the kind of legislation I have just described. But let me assure the Government that if it will bring in a Bill which will help to restore public confidence in our political institutions; if it will bring in a Bill which will be honest and fair and true to the rights of the people, it will find the Opposition ready to assist and to expedite the passage of that measure. But, Sir, if a Franchise Bill is to be introduced in a form which will constitute another blot on our country's name and fame, whatever means the Government adopts to pass it, they must expect to find hon. gentlemen on this side prepared to resist to the utmost of their power legislation prejudicial to the fundamental rights of the people.

The first question we would like to ask the Administration is why should there be a new Franchise Act at all? The old Dominion Elections Act has been on the Statutes for twenty-five years. Administrations representing both political parties have been returned under its provisions. Why then do we need another Act? Why should anything more be necessary than to amend the provisions of the present statute and bring them into conformity with the needs of the country? The Government may have reasons for its proposal and we will await those reasons. But I point out to the Government now so that they may take due notice of it, that if there is any endeavour to substitute a system of Dominion enumeration for the provincial lists which have been followed in accordance with the spirit of our constitution, the Government will have to give a pretty clear and satisfactory explanation before a measure of that kind will meet with the approval of the House and of the country. After the experience the country has had with Dominion enumerators, care will be taken before the franchise of our people is again placed in the hands of the

[Mr. King.]

Administration for manipulation as it may see best by its own creatures. So much, Sir, in reference to the franchise and what it stands for.

Let me now say just a word in regard to the application of the franchise in making good representation in Parliament, for which purpose it is intended. How, under the franchise in relation to the different vacancies that have occurred, has the Government "carried on," so far as representation in this Parliament is concerned? Since the present Administration was returned to power in December, 1917, thirteen vacancies have occurred, but hardly any were filled until the advent of this session. First, the war was made a pretext for not allowing the people representation in constituencies that had been vacated, and to a certain extent the country acquiesced in this. One would have thought that the moment the war was over the Government would immediately have sought to make good the lack of representation by bringing on by-elections in the several constituencies. Did the Government do that? No. One pretext gave way to another. When the war was out of the way the next excuse offered was the necessity of passing a new by-elections Act. When the by-elections Act was passed did the Government attempt to put it into force so as to secure representation in this House for the people of those various constituencies? No. They waited almost until the very day before the opening of the last session before they issued writs, and the Act was so drafted that the vacant constituencies were without representation for almost the period of that entire session.

I think my hon. friend from Kingston (Sir Henry Drayton) and myself were in this Parliament last session for about two weeks. Why did our constituencies not have the privilege of being represented through the whole of last session? Had the Government's plans not miscarried there would have been no representation of those two constituencies. At the very last moment the Government brought in a measure that was not referred to in the speech from the Throne, the Grand Trunk Railway Bill, consideration of which prolonged the sitting to such an extent that these two constituencies were represented for that short period of time.

But how about the constituencies of Assiniboia, North Ontario, Glengarry and Quebec East? They were all without representation in the last session. Not