

comparatively small number of members to this House, it was a uniform Act. It was an Act under which the representation was made equal in all the various portions of the Dominion, and members of Parliament felt that, with the exception of those two small provinces, all members of this Parliament met on a common ground, were elected under a common franchise, and sat in conformity with a uniform principle. There was another very important matter, and it was that the revising officers who were appointed under that Act were men of standing and of character. The Government was responsible to this House for the selection of men of standing and of character to discharge the responsible duties of revising officers. But, there was a still more important feature in the franchise law of 1885, and that was, that there was an appeal from the action of the revisers to a judge, and no voter could be struck off the list, and no voter could be put on the list by any of the revisers without a final adjudication before a judge. That security I consider of the very greatest possible importance, because we all recognize in relation to all the provinces, that we have a judiciary of which the country may be, and is, justly proud. I frankly admit that there is one objection to the existing franchise law, and that is, the great expense which has attended its operation. That expense led to the want of frequent revision, which was a very objectionable thing in itself, and I am quite prepared to say that it is the duty of this House to deal with the question of a franchise for this Dominion in such a way as to obtain a plain and simple workable law, equitable in all its bearings in the various provinces, and unattended by that expense which I regard as the main, if not the only objection to the present law.

Now, Sir, as to the Bill introduced by the Solicitor General. We all know that there is no uniformity in it, and that under its operation the very reverse of a uniform franchise will be introduced. The federal members from Prince Edward Island and Manitoba will occupy relatively the same standing, because the franchise in these provinces is practically the same; but the members from other provinces will be elected on an entirely different franchise. There is no uniformity, I say, and the members of this House under this Bill will be elected by half a dozen different laws, all bearing upon elections for this House and all differing in character one from the other. The members of this Federal Parliament will no longer occupy that independent position which they now occupy, of being elected upon a uniform franchise. But there is worse still. Under the proposed Bill this Parliament parts with its right—a right which I hold to lie at the very foundation of the independence of this Parliament—this Parliament parts with the right of declaring under what franchise its members shall be

Sir CHARLES TUPPER.

elected. Is it desirable, Sir, that the members of the Parliament of this great Dominion shall be selected under laws over which they have no control whatever? Sir, it does not require a laboured argument to prove that the adoption of such a principle is highly objectionable. For this Parliament to part with the control of its franchise is, in my judgment, a fatal objection to this Bill, and one which the more it is considered the more it will be regarded as striking at the first principles on which the representation in the legislature of a great country should be based. In future, if this Bill should pass, we will have seven laws, each differing from the other, under which members are sent to this House. We will not only have all these different franchises, but we will have these provincial laws changed from time to time by parties over whom we have no control, and who will not be obliged to consult the wishes or interests of this Federal Parliament. I wish to again refer to the incident which occurred in the province of Nova Scotia as an illustration of the danger of our parting with control over our own franchise. At the time when we were subject to the provincial franchises, an incident occurred in Nova Scotia which ought to be sufficient to prevent this Parliament from ever considering for a single moment the question of remitting this power to a local legislature. After the provincial elections in Nova Scotia were over, they passed a law intended to affect the election of members to this House, and which they did not intend should operate in regard to their own elections. My hon. friend (Mr. Fitzpatrick) evidently feels that the local legislatures will not pass Acts which will not be regarded as wise and judicious, because these Franchise Acts will bear upon their own elections. But what does the hon. gentleman say of what was done by the Nova Scotia legislature? We had the scandal there exhibited, of the law being changed after the local elections so as to affect the Dominion elections, and without any intention of using that franchise in their own elections. In fact, they repealed that law before the provincial elections were held. That such a thing has ever occurred ought to be sufficient to deter any party in this House from placing the franchise under which members of this House are elected in the hands of a legislature which would do such a thing. But, Sir, that is not all. As I say, these laws are liable to be changed from day to day, and they will be changed. Every person knows that there is no guarantee that the existing Franchise Acts of the various provinces will continue to be the law after this Bill comes into operation. Every person who follows these questions knows that independent of any desire to do wrong, independent of any desire to take such an unfair party advantage as was done in the Nova Scotia case, the very fact that the opinions of members of the various legislatures differ so radically on this question