

friend escape from the dilemma in which he is by intimating, when he sat in silence behind Sir John Thompson, cheering his words—

Mr. WOOD (Brockville). I never cheered his words.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. Then the hon. gentleman gave a silent assent, and a mere assent from him is sometimes better than the most vigorous cheering on the part of some other members who sits behind.

Mr. WOOD (Brockville). The Bill was introduced. I was not a member of the Government at the time, and I had the right then, as every private member has a right, to take whatever position I pleased on a Bill introduced by the Government of which I was a supporter. I never supported the Bill. Sir John Thompson never wanted to introduce provincial franchises over a Dominion franchise. And further, that in adopting the provincial franchise we never made for uniformity alone, and uniformity alone was not the sole principle. We allowed manhood suffrage in Prince Edward Island and British Columbia under the Act of 1885. We held to the right of this Parliament to say just what this franchise should be. My point was, that you cannot, and I do not believe you will say: that one man in the city of Toronto having six votes in the adjoining constituencies can only vote once, while an elector in Montreal can exercise his right to vote seven or eight times in the adjoining electoral districts.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. I am bound to accept the statement of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wood) that he was not in accord with the leader at that time, and that he reserved to himself the right to differ from that Bill if it had been brought to the vote. I accept unreservedly the statement of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wood) to that effect; but, what of all the rest of the party? Were they like him, sitting there giving an apparent assent, while in their hearts they dissented? Was the Government of the day not bound by the leader's statement? Were the gentlemen with whom he (Mr. Wood) was afterward associated, and who are now sitting on the front Opposition benches, not bound by the statement of their leader? What did the organs of the Conservative party say outside the House in addition to what the members of the party said inside? Why, the "Mail" and the "Gazette" were out with flying colours declaring that in this the party had made an advance towards the Liberal line, that all was peace and harmony, and that they were prepared to accept the great principle for which the Liberal party had so long contended. And, after the announcement by the leader of the

House unquestioned, after the announcement of the leading party organs, after the absence of a whisper of dissent from even the rear rank of the party, we now hear my hon. friend (Mr. Wood) announce: Although I did not say anything then, I was entirely opposed to it. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Wood) is entitled to that, but all I can say is that he stands alone. I do not believe he will find another man who stood behind the leader of the Government at that time who will have the courage to make an announcement similar to his. It was stated the other night that this Bill was a contentious one, and I said then, and I repeat now, that I was surprised at the statement, because I thought that all contention on this subject had been buried when the leader of a great party solemnly and constitutionally announced from his place in the House that the party had come to the conclusion to adopt the provincial franchises as the basis of the Dominion franchise. I believed that under British constitutional usage, I might accept that statement of the Prime Minister as conclusive. But it appears that I was mistaken, and we have now to deal with a state of affairs that I venture to say cannot be paralleled in any other representative institution.

We have had another gentleman (Mr. Foster), a leading member of the Administration of Sir John Macdonald, a Finance Minister for many years, now the lieutenant of the leader of the Opposition; we have had him deliver a speech for three mortal hours, not upon the Bill, for he did not speak upon the Bill for ten minutes, but upon all manner of conceivable subjects which he could drag in, and weary and take up the time of the House with. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) did do the House the honour, during the last five minutes of his speech, to refer to the question before the Chair. And, Sir, with that supreme indifference to accuracy which distinguishes the hon. gentleman, and that calm superiority to facts when they stand in the way of his argument, which has made him a past master in this kind of debate, and with that faculty he possesses of half stating the truth and keeping back the other half; the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) tried to lead this House to believe that this Bill was a perfect enormity. He would have you believe that he had never assented to the principle that I read from Sir John Thompson's speech; and his (Mr. Foster's) followers listened to the latter part of his argument, feeling assured that he would be prepared to advance some solid arguments against the Bill itself. Well, I have often admired the skill and ingenuity with which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) applies himself to an argument he understands, the way he will skate over thin ice, the way he will half state a fact, the way he will twist and turn facts in order to make black white and white black. Some-