

ing with them in the briefest manner possible, down through all the speeches that have been made by members on the Government side in the advocacy of this Bill, that—and I think we may say it safely and fairly, and without prejudice to the ability of hon. gentlemen on the other side—the advocacy has been characterised by a want of force, by feebleness. Among the very first steps taken in this measure was one by the hon. gentleman who introduced it, to drop one of the most essential and important features, one to which he informed the House he was very much attached and wedded, and one which he was very desirous to see incorporated in the Bill. Yet, without any effort to secure the passage of that provision in regard to woman suffrage, he abandoned that feature of the Bill without struggle and without any attempt to induce his followers to accept his views in reference to that matter. We had also in the presentation of this Bill, the speech of the hon. the Secretary of State, in which that hon. gentleman, while attempting to instruct the House with reference to the provisions of the measure, demonstrated to the House that he was himself in ignorance of one of the most important provisions which he was attempting to deal with. Whatever may have been accomplished by the gentlemen who have advocated this Bill, whatever purpose they have urged, they have, at all events, failed in one thing—they have failed to show that any cause exists for this innovation, for this change that it is proposed to make in regard to the franchise in this Dominion. They have failed to show that there is any dissatisfaction in any Province with the condition of things existing, they have failed to show that any part of the population of any Province is dissatisfied with the power which rests in the Legislature of their own Province to control the franchise in that Province, they have failed to show that any public interest has been endangered by the exercise of the power which has hitherto been exercised by the Provinces, they have failed to show that popular liberty has been imperilled in the slightest degree or that the public weal would be advanced by any change. They have not only failed to show this, but they have not attempted to show it, they have made no attempt to show that there is any potent or cogent reason for the change they propose. But, although no cause has been shown, a palpable purpose has been manifested. In conversation a few days ago with a prominent member of the Conservative party—and I will not say whether he is a member of this House or not—I advanced the opinion that this was a fundamental constitutional change of very great importance, a change in regard to which the people of Canada ought to be consulted, and that in my belief the proper course to take was to give the Bill full and ample discussion here and then to lay it aside till next Session, enabling us in the meantime to ascertain what were the opinions of the people of Canada in reference to it. I held then, and I hold now, that this would be the proper course, that we ought to feel the pressure of public sentiment, and ought to know, before we take a step of such a fundamental character as this, what the opinion of the people of Canada is in regard to it, whether any great majority of the people are in favor of it or whether a great majority are opposed to it. What was his answer? Not that this will not be the proper course; his answer was: Oh, that would make it too late for the next election. And in that he betrayed inadvertently the whole animus of the Government and of the Government party in the passage of this measure at this time. It is a measure which is not demanded by the public, which it is not designed to use for the public weal, but which is introduced and is to be passed for the purpose of enabling the party in power to exercise influence on the next elections; and, if this measure were to be laid over till the next Session, until we might be possessed of the opinions of the people of Canada with reference to it, then the purpose for which it was

introduced would fail, and it would be unnecessary to introduce it because it could not be used to influence the elections in the interest of hon. gentlemen opposite. This then is the palpable purpose of this Bill.

We live here in this Dominion under federal institutions. The several Provinces are joined together by a federal compact, and it is proper, in discussing this clause, in discussing the advisability of this change with reference to a fundamental principle, in arriving or attempting to arrive at a conclusion whether we shall make the control of the franchise pertain to the Dominion and not to the Provinces, to examine the fundamental principles which underlie the structure of a federal union. The English race has made many important contributions to civilisation. In 1215, when King John granted the Great Charter, when the principle was conceded that taxation should only be levied by consent of the people's representatives, when the principle was conceded that there should be trial by jury and a speedy rendering of justice, there was a great contribution to civilisation. When, in 1265, the Parliament of England first received its distinctive representative character, and borough franchise was established, there was another great contribution to civilisation. When from 1629 to 1649, that great struggle went forward between Charles the First and the Parliament of England, when an arbitrary king attempted to override the liberty of the people of England, to raise the revenues required for the maintenance of a standing army by arbitrary taxation and ship money, when he attempted to override those liberties by the operation of the Star Chamber, and when, as the result of the struggle, Parliament triumphed, liberty was vindicated and the king was conquered, there was another great contribution to civilisation by the English speaking race. When the Bill of Rights was passed in 1689 when the Military Bill was passed, and Parliament assumed control of the sword, there was another great contribution by the English speaking race to civilisation. Another great contribution to civilisation was made when the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed, and the elective franchise was extended, and residency was made a condition of voting. Another contribution was made in 1867, when that franchise was still further extended, and again another in 1872, when voting by ballot was adopted in England. And a still greater contribution was made in 1884, when two millions of the citizens of England were enfranchised by the Bill recently passed. But, more prominently than all these great events, a contribution of infinitely greater importance to civilisation than any of these was made when the federal principle was established, the principle by which races, communities, commonwealths not homogeneous, that could not be assimilated together in one legislative union, can be united together, retaining and maintaining their independence of action separately, and at the same time, acting in harmony as a whole body. I repeat that that contribution was the greatest which has been made by the English speaking race to civilisation, the ability to secure permanent concert of action without the sacrifice of local independence and self control. Now this principle, introduced about 100 years ago, has already produced results of enormous consequence to the human race; already, under this principle of federal union, a power has been built up on this continent numbering, at the present moment, 55,000,000 people, a power which has had a marvellous career of progress and prosperity, a power upon which the federal system has conferred untold blessings. Here, in the Dominion of Canada, we have another experiment; we have another power growing up under the beneficent operation of the federal principle. We see the federal principle in operation, or about to be placed in operation, in Australia, and we have the prospect that before many years a large portion of the African continent will be welded together under the operations of the federal principle.