

the privilege of recording their votes. I say we may come, some time or other, to the general principle of universal suffrage, but, in language which my hon. friend opposite will understand, our principle should be *festina lente*. The time may come when he and all the rest of us will have to agree to manhood suffrage, but for the present we have a measure which is largely in advance of any general suffrage measure which has been adopted for the provinces of this Dominion. I shall vote for it and I trust that the amendment of my hon. friend, well meant as it is—for I can well understand the delicate position in which he and my hon. friend from Alberton are placed—will be rejected. If adopted, it would be fatal to a Bill which has enlarged the privileges of the general voting population of the Dominion, and I know my hon. friend, when he comes to think of it seriously, would not be the means, in any way, of obstructing those privileges, as he would do if an amendment of this kind were adopted.

HON. MR. MCINNES (B.C.)—As I have not taken any part in this debate on the Franchise Bill, and as British Columbia is as greatly affected probably as any other part of the Dominion, I hope I may be allowed to say a word or two on this subject. I am quite in accord with the amendment that my hon. friend from Prince Edward Island has moved. I believe it is a step in the right direction. We have had in the Province of British Columbia universal suffrage, for a great number of years, and our experience is that it has worked admirably. To take this retrogressive step, is contrary to the spirit of the age in which we live. I think a great mistake was made that this subject of the franchise was not submitted to the different provinces before a Bill was framed—I think it was a great mistake, notwithstanding the difference of opinion held by many hon. gentlemen in this House. If the feelings of the different provinces had been tested, I am sure we would not have been sitting here until this late period of the summer. As I said before, I think the tendency is to extend the franchise instead of curtail it.

HON. MR. PLUMB—It has been done by this Bill.

HON. MR. PLUMB.

HON. MR. MCINNES—Only in some of the provinces. I do not see why those provinces which are further advanced in some things than the larger members of the confederation should be deprived of privileges which they have enjoyed for a number of years. I believe if the Government had brought in a Bill, in the first place, adopting universal suffrage such as we have in British Columbia, it would have been acceptable to the vast majority of the people of Canada. I believe it will be but a few years before this Bill, which has cost the country so much valuable time and will cost a great deal of money in the operation of it, with its half dozen or more different qualifications, will be swept off the Statute book and universal suffrage adopted. We are drifting in that direction, and I believe and hope that all of us will see it in a few years. For these reasons I will support the amendment moved by my hon. friend from Prince Edward Island?

HON. MR. DEBOUCHERVILLE—I should like to know if the hon. gentleman who has moved this amendment wishes us to legislate to give universal suffrage to Prince Edward Island?

HON. SIR ALEX. CAMPBELL—Yes.

HON. MR. DEBOUCHERVILLE—If the amendment was to leave to the Local Legislature the right to regulate the franchise I would vote in favor of the amendment, although it might lead to universal suffrage.

HON. MR. SCOTT—That is what it is.

HON. MR. PLUMB—Oh, no, it is not.

HON. MR. DEBOUCHERVILLE—By this amendment it is not asked that the regulation of the suffrage should be left to the local legislature, but that we should legislate that universal suffrage continue in Prince Edward Island. Therefore there are two points involved. I am certainly in favor of, and would vote for an amendment giving to the local legislature the right to deal with the franchise in that province.