

universal manhood suffrage. At the present time I think the preponderance of opinion amongst the more educated classes of the United States is to the effect that the American people have prostituted their franchise. Now, Sir, why do I make this argument? Simply to show that the franchise is a question to be determined by every community for itself. There is my hon. friend from Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron), on the other side of the House. He and I do not agree upon many things, but I would like to know if he would dare to go into the province of Quebec and advocate universal manhood suffrage? Neither my hon. friend from Beauharnois, nor my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk), I am sure, would dare advocate the cause of universal manhood suffrage in the province of Quebec.

Mr. MONK. If manhood suffrage is going to be conferred upon the other provinces, I would revendicate it for the province of Quebec. We would be entitled to it, it would be an injustice to deprive us of it.

The PRIME MINISTER. The hon. gentleman is very careful to qualify his admission. If it is to be conferred upon the other provinces, he wants it for the province of Quebec. But he does not want it for its own sake, however. Neither he nor I want it for our province, and that is the reason why I want to leave the question to each province to deal with as it deems best. This is the very foundation principle of this Bill now before the House. If the province of Ontario desires to have manhood suffrage, well and good; let them elect their legislature upon manhood suffrage. We in the province of Quebec will suffer nothing by it. But we in the province of Quebec believe that manhood suffrage is not the correct thing. If, then, we believe it is not best, why in the name of everything that is just should it be imposed upon us by this Parliament? Now, the hon. member for Kent (Mr. McInerney), a moment ago in speaking, did not fairly represent the arguments that I had made. I never pretended that we have not the right to determine the franchise that should elect the members of this House; on the contrary, we have that right, it is vested in us. But I maintain this principle, that in a system of federated government such as we have, it is more in accord with the fitness of things that this right should be determined by the provincial legislature.

Mr. FOSTER. Why?

The PRIME MINISTER. Because the franchise is of the nature of a civil right, not absolutely a civil right, but of the nature of a civil right.

Mr. FOSTER. What is the distinction?

The PRIME MINISTER. I will not give it in my own language, but I will give it in Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

the language of "Story's Commentaries upon the American Constitution." Story says this:

The truth seems to be that the right of voting, like many other rights, is one which, whether it has a fixed foundation in natural law or not, has always been treated in the practise of nations as a strictly civil right, derived from and regulated by each society, according to its own circumstances and interests.

Now in Canada we are seven different communities, we have seven provinces composing this Dominion. Each one has its own system of laws, each one has its own civil rights, each one has to determine what are its civil rights, and how they should be regulated. Now, I do not pretend that, technically, franchise is a civil right; but I say that in the nature of things it belongs to civil rights, and therefore its regulation is a function that belongs to the provincial legislature.

Mr. DAVIN. Does the hon. gentleman mean that civil rights as coming within the jurisdiction of a province?

The PRIME MINISTER. I do mean that. Does my hon. friend mean anything else?

Mr. DAVIN. I will show what I mean in a moment.

The PRIME MINISTER. I mean to say that civil rights, under our constitution, come within the purview of the local legislature, the franchise being of the nature of a civil right, I say should be determined by the local legislature. My hon. friend said a moment ago he had never heard of such a doctrine before. Why, this was the very contention of the Opposition when the Franchise Act was passed. If I may be permitted to go back to the important debate which took place in 1885. I will say that, having had to speak upon this very subject, I was entrusted by my friends with the duty of moving an amendment. On that occasion I used the following language:—

The member for St. John (Mr. Weldon) said yesterday that the regulation of the franchise was a matter which properly came within the attributes of civil rights, and therefore had better be left in the hands of the provinces. I do not contend that we have not the right, constitutionally, to establish a franchise of our own to apply to the whole Dominion; but I say that, according to the spirit of our constitution, the regulation of the franchise is a matter of civil rights, which comes properly within the attributes of the local legislatures.

This is the doctrine we laid down in 1885.

Mr. McINERNEY. Was that the hon. member for St. John?

The PRIME MINISTER. Those were my own words. The reference was to the late Mr. Weldon. That was the language I used and the doctrine I laid down, and it is the doctrine I am now endeavouring to put