

Mr. MILLS. The hon. gentleman received \$600. I look at the *Toronto Mail*, and what does it say? It says that Mr. Laird, when Minister of the Interior, that I, with other members of the Government, supported the enfranchisement of the Indians. Well, Sir, we did favor the enfranchisement of the Indians, but we did not favor giving them votes; yet that is the impression the newspaper seeks to make upon the public mind. It conceals the fact that the enfranchisement proposed was giving the Indian the right of citizenship, and the power to make contracts for himself. It was to give him the rights of one who had obtained his majority, instead of one who was in the position of a minor. I find exactly the same representation in the *Hamilton Spectator* and the *London Free Press*. Now, if these gentlemen had a good cause, would it be necessary to misrepresent the issue between the parties in this House? And, yet, that is precisely what is done in every Tory paper that I have examined in the Province of Ontario. The only Conservative paper published in English, where a different view is presented, that has yet come under my notice, is the *Montreal Gazette*, where, I think it was one Friday, an article was published which fairly represents the issue between the parties. But not in any other Tory paper that I have seen is this the case.

Mr. MITCHELL. Has not the *Herald* done it?

Mr. MILLS. I thought the hon. gentleman claimed to be independent. My impression was that the *Montreal Herald* claimed to stand evenly between the parties.

Mr. MITCHELL. So it does, but with a strong leaning to Conservatism, I am afraid.

Mr. MILLS. I think there is a strong leaning that way, and that the bias is so great, I would hardly be willing to accept the *Herald* as independent, and as holding the balance evenly between the Opposition and the Government. Now, the hon. member for Kings, Nova Scotia, (Mr. Foster), in discussing the question of a uniform franchise said: have we no federal rights? And he declared that provincial rights, so called, were a hydra-headed monster, that it was a disintegrating principle, that would lead to the destruction of our union if it were at all recognised. Now, I do not admit that contention at all; on the contrary, I hold that the chief element of strength in the union is the autonomy of Provinces, and the extent to which the federal principle is recognised. We had a legislative union between Upper and Lower Canada, and everyone conversant with the history of that union, knows the results. Instead of binding the Provinces more strongly together, they grew more and more antagonistic to each other. The majority of one Province was arrayed against the majority of the other, and it was only by Confederation that we escaped dissolution by revolutionary means. The hon. gentleman said the Opposition were wrong in referring to the provision of the American constitution, in which the State franchise is adopted for congressional representation. The hon. gentleman said the adoption of that franchise was under circumstances wholly different from those which prevail under our system of Government; and that, under the American system, this provision of the franchise is embraced in the State constitutions. Sir, that is not the case. There was not a State constitution that had this principle embraced within it at the time the federal constitution was adopted. The State constitutions were charters that the Provinces had received from the Crown. They had power to fix the franchise by legislative Act. It was an Act within the competence of the State Legislature, when this provision of the constitution was adopted. It was a reasonable provision, based upon the fact that the local circumstances of the population differed, and that the people of each State knew what franchise was best suited to their circumstances. That is precisely the principle that we have

acted upon during the eighteen years that our union has been in existence. The hon. gentleman said we were advocates of State rights. Sir, we are not advocates of State rights in the sense in which that expression was used by the old Democratic party. We are simply contending that, under the constitution, each Province has its rights that ought not to be interfered with by this Government, and that the people of each Province, under this provision of the constitution relating to representation in Parliament, should be allowed to decide for themselves who shall possess, within their limits, the electoral franchise. The Secretary of State said, in reference to this question:

"Is it worthy of our Parliament, is it according to the dignity, which this Parliament should possess, to allow the smallest Legislature of the smallest Province, not only to dictate, but to judge at its will and sole caprice, so as to give direction to the general politics of the country by its representation in the general Parliament."

Now I say it is not beneath the dignity of this Parliament that that should be done. Who is to determine the electoral franchise? I say that primarily it ought to be determined by those who possess the franchise at an election, whether it be for members of the Local Legislature or of this House, before any change is made in the franchise, because the opinion of all the people at a general election should be taken; whether that opinion is expressed in the Legislature or in this House, it is the opinion of the people of that Province. When you propose a general franchise, you propose to take from the Province the absolute power to decide who shall be entrusted with the electoral franchise within its limits, and you put it under the control of a majority of this House. The whole representative body of Prince Edward Island may favor manhood suffrage, and if it is introduced here it may be voted down. Now, are not they the best judges of who, in that Province, shall exercise the electoral franchise? I say they are. I say it is the people who are represented in the local legislature who are best qualified to make a wise choice. The same thing may be said of every other Province. I do not know what the people of Quebec require; I am not acquainted with the circumstances of the population, but I say they are the best judges of what is necessary to qualify, in their Province, for the exercise of the electoral franchise. If you bring the question here, you take it out of the control of the sixty-five representatives of Quebec, and you put it under the control of the 210 members of this House. Every representative of Quebec might vote for one franchise, and might fail to obtain it against the will of the majority here. I say, therefore, it is right and proper that the question as to who shall exercise the electoral franchise in Quebec should be left to the people of that Province to determine, in accordance with the spirit and intent of our constitutional system. And the same thing is true of every other Province of the Dominion, and it is neither wise nor proper, nor in the public interest to take from the Provinces the power to decide this question. The hon. member for West York (Mr. Wallace) said he could not accept Mowat's Act relating to the franchise, and that it would disfranchise at least 500 voters in his own county. I am inclined to think the hon. gentleman has greatly exaggerated the fact. I do not believe it will disfranchise any such number. When the Ontario Government went to the country in 1883 both parties declared themselves in favour of extending the electoral franchise. Both committed themselves to that principle. Why? Because they knew public opinion pointed in that direction. The elections took place, and the Franchise Bill passed through the Legislature as a result of those elections. Did any member propose to restrict the franchise; did the leader of the Opposition take such action? Not at all. He proposed to go further and adopt manhood suffrage, and thereby confer the franchise on a class of men who had never previously possessed it. The question was referred to the electors in Ontario, those who