

franchise nearly equal to manhood suffrage. Every man who arrives at 21 years of age and has performed statute labor in the vicinity, or paid the commutation equivalent to it, is entitled at the next election to vote, whether for members of the Local Legislature or for members of the Dominion Parliament. I think it must have been about the year 1874 or 1875 that a Bill was brought into Parliament respecting the Election law by the Mackenzie Government. That law required the existence of registration courts. It appears that in all parts of the Dominion except Prince Edward Island such courts already existed, but in the Island we had none. Our franchise required none, and we were happily without them, but the Government of the day were unwilling to establish courts at the expense of the Dominion in the Island, because they said—and I dare say very properly—that it would be used as a precedent for charging the expense of registration courts all over the Dominion on the Dominion treasury, and for that reason they refused to bear the cost of establishing registration courts in the Island. Meantime the local Government had given a sort of undertaking that such courts should be established: but some delay occurred in establishing them, and meanwhile the Bill passed through the other Chamber and came up here with a clause which disfranchised a large number of voters in Prince Edward Island. It directed that in any election until registration courts should be established the electorate should be that of the legislative council of the Island, which was a body voting upon an estate valued at, I think, £200 old currency. But still it would have had the effect of excluding a very large number of voters. Since that time some changes have occurred in the Senators from the Island: one gentleman who sat amongst us for a number of years has since been appointed Lieutenant Governor of the Island. He was not content to allow this disfranchisement to take place. I am not sure myself whether another hon. gentleman who still sits amongst us was not foremost in the same cause. For my own part, I know that I was absent in another place at the time, but returning here and finding the state of affairs I gave all the support I could to these senators who were endeavoring to

prevent the disfranchisement of the Island voters. Accordingly an amendment to that clause was moved in this House, and I recollect well the arguments that were made upon it. Many hon. members were opposed to the principle of universal or manhood suffrage, but they said: "In this case we find men of all parties agreeing—men who had acted as leaders of the Opposition and men who had acted as leaders of the Government united to demand protection for these voters." It is not at all surprising to find that the House immediately coincided with that view. The amendment was carried; the bill was sent down to the House of Commons and came back with the amendment accepted. That is a simple and concise history of the Island question as it occurred here some ten years ago. We find the Government adopting and acting upon the very principle which I contended for yesterday, that once a freeman a man is always to be a freeman, unless, indeed, he forfeits his privileges by bribery or corruption in some form or other. They recognized this and actually consented to break through their darling principle of uniformity sooner than incur the responsibility which would have attended the breaking up of the franchise as existing in Prince Edward Island. I must say, hon. gentlemen, and I must express my opinions clearly about this, that it seems to me the Government had a very mean appreciation of the feelings and principles of the people of Prince Edward Island when they thought to satisfy them with such a trifle as this, in lieu of the liberal franchise which they had before. Did the Government think to satisfy them with enjoyment during their lives of a franchise which they could not transmit to their sons, and which any stranger who might come to settle amongst them could not share? It seems to me they must have formed the meanest opinion of the people of Prince Edward Island, and let me tell hon. gentlemen such an opinion is altogether undeserved; for although I am not a native of that island and shall always entertain a warm feeling for the place of my birth, yet that is the place in which I have expended my life's labour, and the people there I know have the very highest sense of honor on a matter of this sort, and you cannot deprive them or their sons of such a privilege and expect that