

ment to attempt to take away the franchise from anybody. What could be dearer to a man, he said, than the right to vote? I will ask, does he so far forget his own past, does not he remember that he was one of those who forced upon Parliament this Franchise Act against which we are now protesting and of which we are now trying to rid the country? Does he not remember that the Act which he helped to place upon the Statute-book took away from hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of men—

Mr. FOSTER. From whom?

The PRIME MINISTER. I will tell him directly. Did not the Government that he supported at that time enact a Franchise Act, which, under the pretense of making uniform the franchise deprive of a vote every man in certain provinces who did not happen to be owners of \$150 worth of property—

Mr. FOSTER. Which province?

The PRIME MINISTER. Or did not happen to be in occupation of real estate to the value of at least \$150? He forced upon Parliament a law which deprived every man of his vote even though he had it by the law of his province, unless he had a property qualification to the amount of \$150. Now at that time British Columbia had manhood suffrage, and by forcing upon British Columbia the Franchise Act of 1895 which he helped to put upon the Statute-book, he committed this very crime with which he charged us a moment ago of depriving men of the right to vote.

Mr. FOSTER. Whom did we deprive of the right to vote in British Columbia?

The PRIME MINISTER. Every man who was not the owner or possessor of property.

Mr. FOSTER. The hon. gentleman has forgotten to read the law.

The PRIME MINISTER. Is it possible the hon. gentleman attempts in that way to deny the proposition I have now made? Is it not a fact that in 1855 British Columbia had manhood suffrage, and that the Opposition of that day protested against the Franchise Act which deprived men in that province of the right to vote unless they were the holders of property to the extent of \$150? But he did it, therefore he was guilty of the crime with which he is now reproaching us. But this shows that we are approaching this subject upon broad principles, and not with the ad captandum arguments with which the hon. gentleman appealed to the committee a moment ago. The hon. gentleman for Kent, N.B. (Mr. McInerney) said a moment ago that he was astonished that a Liberal Government had not endeavoured to enlarge the suffrage instead of restricting it, and he quoted the example of Mr. Gladstone, who, in his days, extended the suffrage. But my hon. friend

knows very well that neither Mr. Gladstone nor any other Liberal statesman of Great Britain ever attempted to force manhood suffrage upon the British people. Now why is it that we do not wish to force the manhood suffrage upon the people of Canada? Why is it that when we, a Liberal Government, are now dealing with this question, we do not adopt the principle of manhood suffrage? There are two reasons for it. In the first place, I want to know why the Liberal statesmen of Great Britain, John Bright, Mr. Cobden or Mr. Gladstone himself, never at any time of their career proposed the adoption of manhood suffrage? Simply because they thought the suffrage ought to be a question of education, simply because every community ought to determine for itself what class of voters should be entrusted with the franchise.

Mr. FOSTER. Which community?

The PRIME MINISTER. The community which has a right to pass the legislation, in our case, the seven communities composing this nation. Now why did not the Reformers of Great Britain, when they enlarged the franchise, as the French did in 1848, at one fell swoop adopt manhood suffrage? Because they thought it better to wait for the influence of education, and to enlarge the franchise gradually until such time as the various classes of the community were ready for a wider franchise. We know that the French nation did otherwise. In 1848, after the proclamation of the second republic, they passed at once from a very restricted franchise to universal manhood suffrage. It is a question to-day whether the French people, in taking that step, acted in the best interests of their country. For my part, Liberal of the Liberals as I am, I do not believe that the French nation acted wisely in 1848 when they gave the right of suffrage to every man, whether he was qualified or not. Now we have the example of the United States, in every state of which to-day manhood suffrage prevails. It was all very well after the establishment of the republic in 1789, when the people of the United States were a small agricultural population, when every man could read and write, when every man was acquainted with the constitution, it tickled the vanity of the American nation to be able to say that every man was a voter, and accordingly they made every man a voter. The system worked well for a time, but in the course of years, when the country was invaded, if I may use that expression, by foreign immigration, at all events, when European immigrants came in in large numbers, many of them illiterate, knowing nothing of the laws of the United States, nor even of their own laws, the principle of universal suffrage began to develop weaknesses, and to-day it is a question whether the United States acted wisely in adopting