

1885 we took the franchises of the provinces, in Prince Edward Island manhood suffrage; in British Columbia manhood suffrage; and the incorporation of these franchises in the Bill made them Dominion franchises.

Mr. WOOD (Brockville). Will the hon. gentleman allow me. The argument was this, that even under manhood suffrage one man would only have one vote. In Ontario we had the principle of one man one vote, and in the province of Quebec we had the principle of one man several votes. So it was not the principle.

Mr. CHARLTON. I have fairly stated the hon. gentleman's position. He cites these two instances to prove that inequalities will exist in the operation of the law in these different provinces. I have fairly stated what the hon. gentleman has put before the House, and I was proceeding to say that the hon. gentleman, the next moment, stated that the Government in 1885, when the Dominion electoral franchise law was passed, did incorporate inequalities in that law. They set out with the assertion that the reason that warranted them in asking Parliament to assume the functions and the duty and the power of establishing a Dominion franchise law, was that it was necessary to have a uniform franchise. The hon. gentleman will not deny that that was one of the reasons assigned.

Mr. WOOD (Brockville). I hope the hon. gentleman won't charge me with interrupting him. I stated that uniformity was not alone the principle. Then I pointed out the danger there was of inequality. That was my point; it was not the principle of uniformity. Read Sir John A. Macdonald's speech in introducing the measure in 1885, and you will find he distinctly stated that it was not, but that, to use his own words, it was no pedantic idea they wished to follow.

Mr. CHARLTON. The hon. gentleman says it was not exclusively upon the assumption that the Government desired to secure uniformity, that this was not the exclusive principle that actuated the Government in the passage of this law. I was about to proceed and say that there were other principles that actuated the Government, principles that were not as creditable to the Government as the principle that it was desirable to secure uniformity. But this was one of the assertions made by the Government of the day as a justification of its conduct in introducing into this House the Electoral Franchise Law of 1885, the assertion that it was necessary to secure uniformity of qualification for the exercise of the franchise throughout this Dominion; but having introduced the law based upon that assumption, among others they proceeded themselves to violate, in the most glaring manner, the very principle they had

laid down as one of the fundamental principles that governed them in their action. They proceeded to grant universal suffrage in two provinces; they proceeded to give, in the maritime provinces, a suffrage based upon a character of property that did not exist and was not used in other provinces; and they succeeded at last in placing upon the Statute-book a law which gave greater diversity of franchise than existed under the provincial franchises. They thus gave away their whole case, and they showed most conclusively that the assertion made, the assumption upon which they proceeded was a mere assumption, was a mere assertion, that did not actually govern their conduct as the consideration of this Bill proceeded.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman tells us that this Bill that we have under consideration received the most exhaustive consideration and criticism, that the Bill, forsooth, was a perfect Bill when it was placed upon the Statute-book of this Dominion, because it had been subjected to three months of adverse criticism, and gone through the fiery ordeal of a consideration in the committee of the whole in those three months. Sir, the Bill was an infamous Bill when it was introduced, it was only slightly less infamous when it became law. The fight of the Opposition in this House for three long months, was to save the country from the imposition of this outrage, conceived for the purpose of giving to the Government of the day power which they unjustly wrested from the Opposition, power which enabled them to deal corruptly and improperly with the formation of the voters' lists of this country. The then Opposition may claim not that they secured for this country through their long debate on the Bill a good law; but they may claim that they secured by their long and vigorous fight the excision of some of the most objectionable features of this law.

What were the circumstances connected with the introduction of this Bill? What were the reasons that led to its introduction? What was the necessity that existed for bringing in this Bill? Under what provisions had we held our elections from 1867 to 1885? Had the country at large expressed any dissatisfaction with the mode in which our elections were held? Had there been any friction? Had there been any demand for change? Had there been the slightest indication, either on the surface or beneath the surface, that the people of the country required an electoral franchise law for the Dominion, or that the interest of the people would be served by such a law? We had a provision inserted in the British North America Act with respect to the mode of holding our elections, a provision that worked well, a provision the propriety of which was never questioned, nor was any question raised as to the desirability of continuing it. That pro-