

cial community in the shape of seizures, fines and forfeitures, and this amount was distributed almost wholly, with the bare exception of something like \$5,000, among the officers of the Customs Department. At present what do we see? Officers with salaries of \$1,000 and \$1,600 respectively added to their salaries, one \$1,200, the other \$2,000, and other officials obtained as high as \$5,000. The truth is these men are making for themselves princely incomes out of spoils derived from the mercantile community. What did we see last year and the year previous? Merchants had their books seized, their stores closed, their business stopped at the will of revenue officers without any process of law, and those merchants were forced to defend their business and their honor in the courts of law, at tremendous expense. It is said that the firm of Ayer & Co. spent \$30,000 in order to obtain justice in the courts at the hands of the Canadian Government. And yet these outrages which have been denounced again and again, and to which the attention of the Government has been called, are to be left unredressed. Well, Mr. Speaker, I do hope that this Session will not pass without some measure being introduced to alleviate the position in which this class of our population is placed. But if the Customs Act is to remain the same—

Mr. BOWELL. It is all the same.

Mr. LAURIER. It is all the same in the way of remedial legislation. If this Act, I say, is to remain the same, there is an Act which is more privileged. It is the Franchise Act. Every man must admit, even hon. gentlemen on the Government side of the House must admit, that the career of the Franchise Act has not been a glorious one. It would seem almost as if the Government had been ashamed from the first of their progeny. They had provided that the Act should be enforced year after year, and yet, having put the light of the Act under a bushel for one year, now they are prepared to amend it. I do not know what is the nature of the measure which is to be proposed, but I am quite sure it will be merely patchwork. The hon. member for Cardwell (Mr. White), who proposed the Address, stated that the criticism which had been applied to the Act was simply with regard to the preparation of the lists. It appears to me, astonishing as the fact may be, that the hon. gentleman does not read the *Montreal Gazette*; for, if he did so, he would be aware that not later than last Monday it contained the opinions of the *Hamilton Spectator*, of the *St. John, N. B., Sun*, and I believe another leading Conservative organ, to the effect that the Act should be amended—in what manner? Not in regard to the preparation of the lists, no, but in the direction of an extension of the franchise. Still I am confident that the reform which is asked by the whole of the Conservative press, by the whole of the Conservative party, and by hon. gentlemen sitting on the other side of the House, a reform in the direction of an extension of the franchise will not be proposed, and the Government will not dare to bring in a measure to extend the franchise. What is asked by the Conservative press and by the Conservative party of all the Provinces except one, is manhood suffrage; and I believe the hon. leader of the Government, himself, would not be averse to manhood suffrage, because we know he is in favor of womanhood suffrage. Though he is prepared to grant womanhood suffrage, yet he will not grant manhood suffrage. Why? Because of the very reason why we on this side of the House voted for that Act, because it is a measure of legislation which should be left to the Provinces and not to the Dominion Government. Why is it that the hon. gentleman does not answer to the call of the press which supports him in Ontario and in the Maritime Provinces? Why is it that he does not grant manhood suffrage? Because, Sir, the condition is imposed that it must be regulated in accordance with all sound principles, according to the

views, the methods, the manners and the social habits of the people in the different Provinces. Those are the views which were held in 1855, when this Act was introduced. Those are the views which all authors who have treated that question have developed, and in that respect let me quote here the opinion of Judge Story upon the American Constitution. Speaking on this very question he said:

"So that we have the most abundant proofs that among a free and enlightened people, convened for the purpose of establishing their own forms of government and the rights of their own voters, the question as to the due regulation of the qualifications has been deemed a matter of mere state policy, and varied to meet the wants, to suit the prejudices, and to foster the interests of the majority. An absolute, indefeasible right to elect or be elected, seems never to have been asserted on one side or denied on the other; but the subject has been freely canvassed as one of mere civil polity, to be arranged upon such a basis as the majority may deem expedient, with reference to the moral, physical and intellectual condition of the particular State."

Those reasons apply, Sir, not only to the regulation of the franchise, but they are the very reasons which are the basis of the federative form of government. Why is it we have a federative form of government? It is simply because the manners, and the habits, and the interests of the people will vary from one State to another State, or from one Province to another Province. And in all reason, since we have a federative government, it should also be left to the Provinces to determine in what manner the franchise in each Province shall be exercised. No greater evidence of the statement which I now make is to be found than in the conduct of the Government which resists the will of the majority of their organs who are asking for an extension of the franchise, who are asking for manhood suffrage; and though some of them are in favor of that system, yet the Government will not grant it, because there are some Provinces—amongst others, the Province to which I belong—which would not look upon an extension of the franchise to that extent favored. I am quite sure, Mr. Speaker, that, whatever may happen, the Conservative press, which have been asking for an extension of the franchise to the extent of manhood suffrage, is doomed again upon this occasion to bitter disappointment. There are other measures, Mr. Speaker, which are mentioned in the Speech; one relating to bills of exchange, cheques and promissory notes and bills of lading, offences in connection with municipal councils, improvement of criminal procedure, inspection of lumber and timber, improving the postal system, and increasing the efficiency of the Mounted Police. But of all these I have only to say that none of them will set the world on fire. They may be good or they may be bad, but we do not know, and I will not pronounce upon them until they are brought down. They are without importance most of them, and I do not know that they will have any effect but that of tinkering with the recently Revised Statutes, and of making up a big volume of statutes for this year. Now, among the only other measures which are announced is a measure for promoting our trade with Australasia by means of a subsidy. As to the subsidy itself I have nothing to say at this present moment, and we had better wait until the details of the measure are brought down, in order to see what they are with regard to the general idea which they are supposed to involve, viz.: extension of trade with Australasia. I need only say that, on this side of the House, we shall ever be disposed to favor an extension of trade with any part of the world. It is the basis of our system; it is our very policy to extend trade. When the hon. gentlemen want to go to the Antipodes in order to get a trade, I am only sorry that they cannot see the advantage of knocking at the door of our neighbors where they would be sure to find a better and more extended trade. But, Sir, in the Speech to which we listened yesterday there is a very novel feature. As far as my memory goes, for the last ten years we have never found the feature which we see to-day in the Speech. There is not the slightest self-congratulations which hon.