

ed for their whole political life since their majority in this country?

Why, Sir, the more you look into this thing the more monstrous—and I use the word advisedly—it seems to be. And what is it done for? For a mere theory and to get rid of a delicate and difficult piece of business, the making of a franchise which shall be properly applicable to the whole Dominion and yield general satisfaction. These gentlemen can tear down the preceding franchise law—they love to do that. And they knew all about it then. But, Sir, it is a difficult thing, after they have torn it down, to construct an edifice as good or better. These architects and carpenters confess that they are unable to do this, and so they turn it over to the cheaper workmen of the different provinces, and say: Put up a hut in every province, we cannot raise a central temple for this Dominion. Now, Sir, I do not know that I need to try to find words more strong to characterize this than I have already used. But, Sir, it does seem to me to be inherently necessary, if any parliamentary body is to keep its self respect and its power, that it shall regulate its own franchise. Why, the Solicitor General said this afternoon—and will he say it now after his leader has spoken?—

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Hear, hear.

Mr. FOSTER. He will. Inwardly, I suppose. But whether he will vocally make known the same feeling, I do not know. He said this afternoon: We are not giving up control of the franchise; and if, after we have enacted this plan, we find the local legislation in its transmutations, should change the franchise in a way that we do not think right, we will correct the evil. But the moment you step in to correct, that moment you come against your Prime Minister and leader, for he has declared that it is the inherent and sole right of the local legislatures to fix the franchise. If it is the sole and inherent right of the local legislatures to fix the franchise, what business has this legislature to meddle with it, no matter what the local legislature does? By the hon. gentleman's own theory, he cannot meddle with it—or else he denies himself which, it is true, is not a difficult thing for him to do. But surely he will not attempt that trick every day of the year and on all questions that come up. I ask him, if he makes that assertion and lays down the principle that the local authority ought to be the only repository of power with regard to the franchise, as it has the best knowledge of it and is, therefore, best fitted to fix it, is he going to lay the antagonistic principle alongside of it, and expect them to rest together, that we should interfere with the laws passed by the local authority if at any time they do not please us? No man who has the least idea of logic or consistency could put there two antagonistic principles together. And so the right hon.

Mr. FOSTER.

gentleman and the Solicitor General cannot occupy the same chair in this respect, because the Solicitor General declares in the first place that he would like—and is only considering the method—to remove the grievance as to the white voters, and if the local legislatures does not do what is right, we will step in and reform the case to such an extent as it is wrong. But, Sir, what about the independence and self respect of this body, when we look out upon seven different provinces, and find these provinces working fantastic changes with the franchise, changes dictated by party spirit or by what they may consider good principles, it makes no difference which, but which in every case may be totally and diametrically opposed to our convictions upon this matter? We sit here and legislate on a set of conditions which we reprobate and do not consider to be the best, and yet say we keep our self respect. It is impossible to do so, Sir. And if, this year, this Jubilee year, the hon. gentleman has boasted that he has brought a nation to birth, during this same year if he carries this Bill, he can put forth another boast—that after the nation was born, he degraded it by saying that it was not fit to form and frame its own franchise. Sir, the Government must be a unit upon this matter. The Solicitor General must give up that Bill now and let somebody else take it, or the right hon. gentleman must moderate his theory. Which will be done? Neither. Neither, Sir. The Solicitor General will hold on, as he has held on before; and the right hon. gentleman will theorize, as he has theorized before. And both will scrape along drawing their salaries, the Solicitor General feeling that he has not been able to do what his sense of justice prompted him to do, and my right hon. friend will sail along utterly oblivious to whether his theory is right or not, or what wrong he commits to men as good as he, or I, or any of the rest of us, if he can get his fantastic theory of the franchise carried out—the theory that this great body shall have nothing to say with reference to the franchise upon which it exists.

The PRIME MINISTER. I would endeavour, if at all possible, to lift this discussion to the level which it ought to occupy by reason of its importance. I would endeavour, if such a thing were possible, to have this grave question discussed in a quiet and judicial manner. I am afraid, however, that this would be expecting too much from my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) who has just taken his seat. The hon. gentleman does not seem to be aware of the many contradictions which are involved in his argument. He laboured, and laboured at great length to prove the malignancy of this Government in taking away the franchise of certain persons in a province if this Bill should become law. He stated, and stated with some warmth, that it was wicked for this Parlia-