

say unreservedly that upon this point as to the principle upon which the basis of the Dominion franchise should be built, that principle it was contended by the Liberal party should be the provincial franchises, and for five years that principle was conceded by our opponents, and they admitted that it was the proper principle. There was no difference between the parties. It was not a contentious principle until faction made it so; it has not been a contentious principle for the last five or six years. When the hon. gentleman argued, therefore, that the principle we have adopted was a vicious principle and a wrong principle, he was opposing the declarations of the party which he now leads, declarations made in this House from time to time, and most notably by the late leader, Sir John Thompson, to whose remarks I will refer in a moment or two.

Now, he says the Act of 1885 was a good Act in several respects, he says it gave practical uniformity. He instanced the exceptions, every properly and very justly, of Prince Edward Island and of British Columbia; but he failed to go further, as he ought to have gone. I would like to ask the hon. gentleman this question, when he is thinking this out, as he ought to think it out, and as I have no doubt he does try to think it out in the seclusion of his study—I would like to ask him this question: Is there uniformity in the Act of 1885, leaving Prince Edward Island and British Columbia to one side? Were the franchises for the city and the county the same? Did not a man who possessed the right to vote in the city, pass into the county and lose that right to vote? Certainly he did. The same qualifications did not exist. The hon. gentleman knows well, no one, from his large experience, knows better, that in all British representative institutions it has not been sought to obtain pedantic or absolute uniformity, that it is not thought desirable to have pedantic or absolute uniformity; but that the franchises change with the changing conditions of the people, as they ought to change. In the city you have a franchise, one amount, one fixed franchise; in the country districts, an entirely different one. In one province we have one franchise, in another province another franchise—just to suit what was thought to be the conditions of the people, and to offer an opportunity to give expression to the mature wish of the people in each province. That has been the case with us, and that is the case, not only in the mother country, but in all countries possessing British representative institutions. I ask the attention of the hon. gentleman for a moment to the state of the franchise in Great Britain and Ireland. Is the franchise the same in England as it is in Scotland? Is it the same in Scotland that it is in Ireland? Is it the same in the city as it is in the boroughs? Why, the hon. gentleman knows there is

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no such thing as uniformity known, or recognized, or legislated for in the great country from which we take our cue. Such a thing as uniformity is not known, and such a thing as uniformity would be unjust, because the conditions of the people in cities and boroughs, in Ireland and in England, and in Scotland, are entirely different, and you must legislate in conformity with the actual conditions of the people.

Now, Sir, the hon. gentleman put a point which was a very strong one, if it was correct. He says: I call the attention of Parliament to the serious fact that we are legislating to-day to part with our right of declaring how its members should be elected. Sir, we are doing nothing of the kind. The hon. gentleman surely is wrong. The House is legislating with the full knowledge of what the franchise will be in each province of this Dominion. The hon. gentleman says this may happen, and the other thing may happen. Sir, it has been the boast of our elastic British constitution that as conditions change, we will change the legislation necessary to meet them; and if conditions change in this Dominion of Canada, if any of the horrible things happen which my hon. friend predicts, if the great province of Ontario confers the franchise upon a class of people that we do not approve of, surely it is open to this Parliament to change the Act. We do not part with the power. We adopt the franchise as it is to-day, we adopt the provincial franchise as long as we think it suitable for our interests, but we do not deprive ourselves of the power of regulating our franchise if we choose. What was the fact before? When this confederation was first brought into existence, we had a scheme, a system, very similar to the one which we are now asked to adopt; we had the provincial franchises as the basis of the Dominion franchise. That system worked for eighteen long years, and I venture the assertion that it worked with hardly a hostile criticism from any part of the Dominion. Who revoked that system, and why was it revoked? Was there a call from the people to revoke it? Dare anybody stand up and say that during the first eighteen years of this Dominion that franchise was an infamous one, or proved a curse, or was not a blessing? Why, we know that the voice of the people was obtained through that system better than it has even been obtained after the Bill of 1885 was introduced. We propose, not something entirely novel or new, but we propose, after having had some twelve years experience of that Franchise Bill of 1885, that we should return to the system that worked so admirably from 1867 up to 1885. But the hon. gentleman says: Suppose a minority representation was introduced in the great province of Ontario, where would you be then? Well, supposing it was, I cannot see how that is going to affect us. The principle of having a minority representative