

caught the Chairman's eye, but at the Chairman's instance, I allowed the hon. gentleman to speak. Now, I propose to say what I have to say in as brief a way and in as fair a way as possible. I think I have met the only statement of importance put forward by the hon. member for Inverness. If the conclusion that he drew was based upon it, it must be erroneous.

Now, the Prime Minister threw a new bone of contention into this debate. He is the first to announce the doctrine that to the local legislatures belongs the franchise. I would ask him if he states that as a constitutional principle or as a question of policy. I would like the hon. gentleman to state what ground he takes. He surely cannot seriously state, in the presence of many lawyers in this House, in the presence of men who know the constitution of their country, in the presence of the intelligent members of this House, such a doctrine as this as a constitutional doctrine. For, it is a complete absurdity, it is known to be utterly foreign to the facts, it is known to be completely erroneous. His statement was applauded by members on the back benches, but not by the Minister of Marine and Fisheries (Sir Louis Davies), not by the hon. Minister of Public Works (Mr. Tarte), not by the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir Richard Cartwright), not by the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals (Mr. Blair), not by the hon. Solicitor General (Mr. Fitzpatrick), not by the hon. member for Lambton (Mr. Lister). There was not a lawyer of standing on that side who cheered this doctrine announced for the first time in this House, announced for the first time before any serious deliberative body in Canada, announced for the first time before sensible men—the doctrine that to the local legislatures belongs the franchise of the country. That is an entirely erroneous constitutional doctrine. This Parliament certainly has the power to say what shall be the franchise upon which members shall be elected to this House. Does the hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) deny that? I am not here to say that we cannot delegate that power to the local legislatures. It may be that my right hon. friend may take the other horn of the dilemma and claim that it is true as a matter of policy. But if he should stand up in this House and enunciate the doctrine—that it is the constitutional right of the local legislatures to control the franchise, I deny it most emphatically, and I do not believe there is a lawyer even on his own side of the House who will endorse his statement. I shall be surprised, astonished, if there is a single gentleman on the other side, of legal training, or a man of common sense, who will stand up and enunciate the doctrine that to the local legislature and to them alone belongs the right to declare what the franchise shall be upon

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which the members of the Canadian Parliament shall be elected. But if he takes the ground that it is a matter of policy, then the hon. gentleman is turning back the hands of the clock, he is making a retrograde movement. I understand that the Liberal party has claimed to be a party of progress. Who ever heard of the Liberal party in England, for instance, passing laws to restrict the franchise. I have never heard of it. Why, it was the boast of Mr. Gladstone, it was the boast of the Liberal party in England that they had extended the franchise and had given it to many who had never possessed it before. But hon. gentlemen opposite have made a retrograde movement. Why, will hon. gentlemen opposite name to me a single confederated country in the world in which there is not uniformity of franchise or in which the power to control the franchise does not rest with the federal authority?

The PRIME MINISTER. Do you say that seriously?

Mr. McINERNEY. I ask it most seriously. In the republic of Switzerland is it not provided that there is uniformity of franchise and with the central government lies the power to say what it shall be. In the German confederation is not the same thing true, and in the old North German confederation was not the same thing true? I can give the hon. gentleman the sections of the constitutions of these countries on which I rely, because I have them under my hand. They show that in every case it is declared that the franchise shall be uniform or that the central government shall have the power to control the franchise. On this side of the Atlantic, in the republic of Brazil, the United States of Brazil—because it is a federated country—the same rule and doctrine holds as in these older countries that I have mentioned. Now, the hon. gentleman may point out to me the case of the United States of America. In the United States of America there is a general provision that every citizen of twenty-one years of age shall have the franchise. I am not here to maintain that in some particulars and in some instances, certain restrictions are not put on individuals claiming the franchise in certain states, or that in certain other states they have not enlarged the franchise locally, that is beyond the general principle as recognized, as, for instance, in Wyoming, where they allow women to vote.

But, Sir, in the United States of America the general principle of the constitution is that every citizen 21 years of age shall have a vote. But there is an important difference between the principle underlying their constitution and that underlying ours. In the United States it is well known that every power which is not expressly stated in the constitution as belonging to the federal authority, belongs to the state authorities;