

from the First Minister to address the House. He spoke at some length of what they were going to allow. We have had illustrations of that in days gone by. We have seen attempts to cripple this debate; on one occasion we saw nearly the entire front rank hunting up authorities by which we could be kept more clearly to the finest point under consideration. The hon. member for Lincoln said that Ontario was assuming too much importance in this matter. Any one can see that this is at the bottom of the whole measure, for I believe if we could eliminate from this question the antipathy to the Mowat Administration you would take a very large element out of the Act. If Mr. Mowat would only resign or leave the country and surrender to hon. gentlemen opposite the Government he manages, one great cause of disturbance and irritation and discontent would be removed from the Ministerial benches. The hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Rykert) gave as a reason for this measure that the Provinces might pass new franchises. Further on, he said that Ontario had passed an Act which disfranchised non-resident property holders. Of course, that was incorrect; Ontario did not disfranchise them, but limited them in effect to one vote where they reside. I shall not follow that hon. gentleman, who went back as far as 1866, but will refer simply to his contention that the people thoroughly understood the Bill; on the contrary, I believe that not one person in a thousand in this Dominion knew anything about the franchise Bill at the beginning of this discussion. He said the statements we were making with regard to the expense were as exaggerated as those we had made with reference to the cost of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Well, that may come back to the hon. gentleman before long. If the expenses under this Bill are indicated as clearly as were the estimates of the cost of the Canadian Pacific Railway, I fancy our predictions will not fall far short of the mark. In discussing the Ontario Act the hon. gentleman ignored a large number to whom it gives the franchise under the provision of householders and wage-earners. I propose to address my remarks to the question of the provincial franchise as against the franchise proposed by this Bill. Certainly, the constitution gave the Dominion Parliament the authority to choose what franchise it would have. But whether it gave them the right under existing circumstances is another question. In 1874, under Mr. Mackenzie's Administration, after the people had received notice and their support had been asked, the measure was carried under which we are now acting. In first submitting this to the people, Mr. Mackenzie acted like himself and like the party he led; in declining, first, to submit it to the people, the present action is like the party opposite. It is not urged that the measure which was then drawn by Mr. Dorion, a gentleman who possesses the respect of everyone, has not given satisfaction. It is true that the member for Cardwell (Mr. White) stated that the 13 members of the Government would be disfranchised under the Ontario law. It was news for us, that the 13 ministers were all from Ontario, and it is not the case in a single instance that one of those members will be disfranchised. The system which we have pursued in the past is not a new one on this continent, but has been adopted by the United States under circumstances as identical with ours as it is possible for a republican form of Government to be with that under which we live. I believe we might well consider their experience in this regard, and I shall not be debarred from the consideration by the sneers which have been made in reference to the speech of the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton), by the hon. member for Montreal Centre (Mr. Curran), who said of the hon. member for North Norfolk:

"The hon. gentleman can never stand up in this House, he can never speak on any subject, he can never deal with any branch of the public affairs of this country, without dragging in the United States, without
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dragging in the practice of the United States, without dragging in all the great and glorious beauties of the constitution, without holding up to us as models the great men of the United States, as if we had not men in our empire, and especially in our own country, whose example is worthy of being followed, as a bright shining light to guide us in the way we should go."

Sir, there are great men in the empire. Great names who never sneer at the great men of that country; that work is left for small men. The great men of England are proud of their kinsmen in the United States, and rejoice in the assistance they have given to the advancement of civilisation; they rejoice in the additions they have made to the sum of human freedom. The question of the franchise is not a new one with them. When our grandfathers were young their ablest men had given their best thought to it, and had decided it, and the result has proved that they decided it wisely. I mention no unknown name when I refer to Col. Alex. Hamilton, one of the brightest intellects this hemisphere has produced, one whom the United States desires to claim as all her own, although he was a West Indian by birth. His remarks read as if they were written during these debates. In relation to the action of the founders of their institutions, Hamilton said:

"To have reduced the different qualifications in the different States to one uniform rule would probably have been as dissatisfactory to some of the States as it would have been to the convention. * * * It must be satisfactory to every State, because it is conformable to the standard already established, or which may be established by the State itself."

Of those measures Bancroft has said:

"They disturb no more than was needed for the success of their work."

In those two lines there is a lesson of wisdom that we would do well to follow. Those gentlemen who are in earnest in desiring to perpetuate Confederation would do well to take those words to heart, and in the action of this Parliament disturb as little as possible the autonomy of the Provinces. "A State," said Ellsworth, "is the best judge of the circumstances and temper of its own people." Is not that equally true of us? Can we have a better maxim to go by? Are not the Provinces the best judges of their own circumstances, their own wants and peculiarities? After careful deliberation that convention came to their decision and embodied it in the second article of the constitution:

"The House of Representatives shall be composed of members elected by the people of the several States, and the qualification in each State shall be the qualification recognised for electors of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature."

Why the most numerous branch? Because, in dealing with national matters they were dealing with matters which applied to the greatest number of people; in dealing with local matters they were dealing with property mainly; and their revenue, like ours, being derived from Customs and Excise, it was very proper that it should have the most extended franchise. They carefully avoided the error which we seem to be about to commit, of curtailing the franchise in many of the Provinces—in some regards, in every one of them—because there is not a single Province in the Dominion, as the Bill stands now, in which a considerable number of voters will not be disfranchised.

Mr. BAKER (Victoria). Yes; there is British Columbia.

Mr. CAMERON (Inverness). Nova Scotia.

Mr. FAIRBANK. There is not a single Province in which this Bill does not disfranchise many.

Mr. BAKER. I take objection to the word "considerable," more particularly.

Mr. FAIRBANK. I do not attempt to say to what extent this Bill will disfranchise people in the Pacific Province, but I believe it disfranchises in that Province to almost as great an extent as it does in any Province, and there is certainly one class of persons in that Province which I