

because while we admitted at once the constitutional right of the House to change its franchise either by lowering or by elevating it, we yet protested against the doctrine that the rights of people should be taken away without their consent and without them having an opportunity of expressing their opinion. Therefore, I repeat that had this Bill come before us in the form in which it was first presented I should certainly have gone with my hon. friend to protect the rights of those people in some way or other. The mode in which that was dealt with I have already intimated. It was a bill to take away the franchise, and when it came up to the place in the legislature of Nova Scotia, which corresponds to the position that this House occupies in the Dominion Parliament I, after feeling my way to know exactly how I stood, took upon myself the responsibility to move that clause. I moved a rider to the effect that the Act should not go into operation until after the next general election, and that was carried; and I may say, as a bit of provincial history, that that little rider, which was only passed by a majority of one, had a most material effect upon the future fortunes of Nova Scotia and, I may add, of this Canada of ours, because when the election took place it led to a change of Government. The Liberal or Reform Government which pressed that bill to disfranchise those people, were turned out of power and the Conservatives came in. It was then that the present Sir Charles Tupper—at that time Dr. Tupper—became provincial secretary, and he remained in power three or four years. The election took place in 1863, and in the very first session of the new Parliament the hon. member, who had joined in opposing that bill, moved a resolution for the appointment of commissioners to settle the question of maritime union with Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick which led, as is now a part of our history, to the larger union in which we now stand. Therefore I shall refer no further to the part I took in it myself, for which I got little credit afterwards from those who benefited by it, although I got a very considerable amount of credit and some abuse at the time, as to which I may say I care nothing, because it is a matter of no con-

sequence to me whether I get credit or not. I did it as a matter of duty to protect the interests of people who were not there to protect themselves, and I should do the same with regard to the people of Prince Edward Island, but this is a very different case. In this instance the rights of existing electors are preserved by this Bill. They are allowed the privilege which they now enjoy, and my hon. friend seeks to carry that protection down to those who come after them on the ground, as he puts it, that they should have the right to transmit to those who come after them the same powers that they have themselves. Now the right of voting is not a right that a man can will or transmit to his sons. It is a personal right, a right which he enjoys under the constitution and which is given to him by law, and there is no pretence that under this Bill injury is done to anybody who now enjoys the right of voting. That right still remains, and my hon. friend might have simply effected his purpose by moving this amendment and with a much greater degree of clearness, I think, if he had struck out in the 21st line "every person who at the time of the passing of the same;" that would have left the words to read "every person who is of the age of 21 years, etc." The amendment would have effected what he desires better than by asking the House to commit themselves to a principle which, if adopted, I do not hesitate to say, would lead to this Bill being wholly recast. My hon. friend, not content with taking the opinion of the House by striking out these words applying the provision to everybody, asks the House to commit themselves to a separate sub-section by which they declare that the provincial franchise shall be the Dominion franchise. Therefore my hon. friend has put his case in a form most unfavorable to himself and to the views for which he contends. But as far as my impression goes the Act at the present time is entirely right and has gone as far as it is possible, or as far as my hon. friend could have expected the House to go. My hon. friend deserves all credit, not alone for the action he has taken this evening on behalf of his people, but for his continual advocacy of their rights. I sympathize with his efforts, and am disposed to accord to my hon. friend every credit for them, but I take it for granted