

tional authority, the hon. member for St. John (Mr. Weldon), seems to have made up his mind positively on the question, and his decided opinion is that we have not the power. He said :

"I believe that the power of regulating the franchise is rightly vested in the Province. I believe that the people in their Local Legislature are the parties who have the right to regulate the franchise, and that is one of their civil rights which may fairly be said to be under the control of the Local Legislature."

There we have the different opinions of hon. gentlemen opposite, and I will, therefore, in order to set the matter at rest, place upon record the views of one of the founders of our constitution, a gentleman whose opinions are recognised by hon. gentlemen opposite as undoubted authority, a gentleman who on constitutional questions was looked upon as a very high authority. I refer to the Hon. George Brown. His opinion will settle the question, I believe, so far as this debate is concerned. I hope these legal luminaries who are so apt to place their views on record before the House on legal questions will see, so far as this Bill is concerned, that we have the right to pass it, whether there be necessity for it or not. The Hon. George Brown said :

"It has also been objected that though the resolutions provided that existing Parliaments of Canada shall establish the electoral divisions for the first organization of the Federal Parliament, they do not determine in whose hands the duty of distributing any additional members is to be voted. No doubt on this head need exist. The Federal Parliament will, of course, have power to regulate all arrangements for the election of its new members."

So that those who knew best what the Act really meant declared that this Parliament has the right to regulate its own franchise. Then we find that, in regard to a measure affecting the franchise which was introduced in 1869, the organ of the party used this language, showing that the Reform party was of opinion that the Dominion franchise should be settled by this Parliament and that we should not be dependent on the uncertain franchises of the Provinces :

"The Provinces moreover are constantly altering their assessment laws and it would hardly do to pass a new election law for the Dominion every time the mode of assessment changes in the Provinces. A way out of the difficulty might be found in accepting the franchise as adopted (not to be changed) in the different Provinces as the franchise of the Dominion, but that would be at the expense of uniformity. If we intend to avoid the inconsistencies in the United States [how does the hon. member for Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) like that?] and to have the same conditions confer the Dominion franchise on all parts of the Dominion, we cannot leave the qualification or regulation of voters to the Provinces."

So you will see that, at that time, it was fully understood and conceded that, sooner or later, they must have the franchise fixed and determined by this Parliament. Then we recollect that, when the Bill was introduced in 1870, to regulate the franchise, the leader of the Opposition who spoke long upon that question, who discussed the Bill in all its details, said not a word against this Parliament, fixing its own franchise. Those who were then in Parliament will recollect that a motion was made in 1870 by Mr. Ferguson, seconded by Mr. Drew, that the franchises of the several Provinces should be the franchise recognised by the Dominion. That resolution received no favor at the hands of the House. The leader of the Opposition did not speak in favor of it, did not recognise it; on the contrary it was lost without a division, or, as we call it, "lost on a division," the House not being divided upon it. Then, on April 22nd, 1874, the leader of the Opposition, speaking upon this subject said :

"He denied that in passing the Bill, Government were abandoning the power of regulating the franchise. The House had not exercised that franchise for many years, and if it turned out that the Province abused that power, the House had the power of taking it into their own hands."

Our justification for passing this Act is that Ontario has abused its powers and has usurped a power which it had no right to usurp. Since these gentlemen have spoken so much about our violating the provin-

cial rights, and violating the trust of the people, I propose, though I know it is distasteful to my hon. friend from South Brant (Mr. Paterson), to bring these gentlemen face to face with their own record, and to show that the Reform party in this Province has studiously and systematically, since 1866, opposed the extension of the franchise, opposed the rights of the lower orders, as they call them, opposed the rights of the people, opposed the rights of the poor man, and sought to keep the franchise limited to property, and to keep it as high as possible. I am sorry I am obliged to annoy the hon. member for South Brant, by bringing him face to face with his record, but I cannot help it. I shall first take the year 1866. In the old Parliament of Canada, an effort was made to reduce the franchise in cities from \$600 to \$500. My hon. friend the Postmaster General, made a very strong appeal to the House in favor of that reduction, but every leading Reformer in that Parliament voted that the franchise should be kept at \$600. But the hon. member was rather tenacious of his opinion. He was a member of the first Conservative Government of the Province of Ontario, and I had the pleasure of supporting him during the whole time he was in that legislature. The very first act he did, in 1868, was to reduce the franchise in cities to \$500, in towns to \$300, and in villages and townships to \$200.

Mr. CARLING. \$400 in cities.

Mr. RYKERT. No, \$500 first. In 1868, he reduced it in cities to \$500; the following year he followed that up by reducing it to \$400, \$300 and \$200; but something very remarkable took place during the course of that debate. An hon. gentleman who then occupied a seat in that House for the County of Welland, who was rather democratic in his views, as these gentlemen then supposed, moved that the franchise be reduced in townships from \$200 to \$100. One would suppose, after hearing the speech of the leader of the Opposition and the views expressed by hon. gentlemen opposite on this question, that the hon. the leader of the Opposition would have voted for that, but we find that he and my genial friend from South Perth (Mr. Trow) voted against that proposition as an invasion upon the rights of the people. My hon. friend from South Perth will recollect that very well. Mr. Blake, I beg his pardon, the leader of the Opposition, was very indignant at that time. He used this language :

"He thought the member for Victoria (Mr. Cockburn) had let the cat out of the bag. The real difficulty was not that persons were prevented by the election law from voting who ought to vote, but that the system of assessment was defective. People were anxious, on the one hand, to vote, but were anxious, on the other hand, to pay a very small tax. The hon. gentleman said that, in the new townships, they did not care to be assessed at more than \$1 per acre; because, in that case, when the county council came to equalise the assessment, injustice would be done them. The result of this feeling was that a nefarious system of sham and mock assessment was carried on in the country. The assessments were ridiculously small—a state of things degrading to the morals of the country. It might be that in a very few cases, in townships and villages, there might be a man intelligent enough to exercise the franchise, who was the owner of a lot and house on which he resided, really worth no more than \$200—but this must be a God-forsaken part of the country, and the domicile must be of a peculiar description."

That was the opinion of the leader of the Opposition then. He thought it must be a God-forsaken part of the country where the franchise should be reduced lower than \$200, and where a man would not have property worth that to vote upon. We find also that my hon. friend from South Perth, on that occasion, made a somewhat short speech, but to the point, as usual. He said :

"He thought the franchise low enough, but particularly in the rural districts."

That is the way he is reported in his organ of December 4th, 1868. He wanted to keep it up to \$200. Then a motion was made in favor of female suffrage, and I would direct the attention of the Opposition to the views of their leader at that time. A few nights ago he spoke two or three