

HON. MR. SCOTT—I will read it :—  
“ In the Province of Prince Edward Island the provincial qualification of voters shall continue to be the qualification of voters for the election of members of the House of Commons.”

HON. SIR ALEX. CAMPBELL—We are asked to enact that.

HON. MR. DEBOUCHERVILLE—That is the way I understood it. We do not tell the Local Government that they shall regulate the franchise, but we say—we, the Parliament of Canada, declare that they shall continue to have universal suffrage.

HON. MR. SCOTT—No, no.

HON. MR. DEBOUCHERVILLE—I may not understand the language well, but that is the way it presents itself to me.

HON. SIR ALEX. CAMPBELL—You understand it correctly.

HON. MR. DEBOUCHERVILLE—I am in favor of leaving to the local legislatures the fixing of the franchise, but I object to the Dominion Parliament declaring that we are in favor of universal suffrage. I have opposed the bill, not because I consider it is not liberal enough, but because I consider it is too liberal, and having voted against the Government measure on that ground, I think I must, to be consistent, vote against this amendment.

HON. MR. VIDAL—I must confess that I am not a little surprised that my hon. friend from Prince Edward Island whose candor and clearness of statement and fairness are so fully and constantly recognized, should to night try to put so many of us in a false position by his reference to the vote in this House in 1874 upon the Prince Edward Island Bill. In my judgment there is no analogy whatever between the two cases. In the one instance there was an attempt to interfere with one single province, and to deprive many of the people of that province of the exercise of a right which they had enjoyed—an interference which we in our wisdom and exercising the duties rightly and properly

devolving upon us, put a stop to. The hon. gentleman alluded to the functions of this House in relation to this matter. I recognize those functions fully, and I think if there is any one thing which should be kept in view more than another in this House it is that we are here to protect the rights of the provinces. The *raison d'être* of the Senate is to accomplish that end, so that the preponderating vote in the other House, of any large province, should not bear unduly on any province having a smaller representation. I think the hon. gentleman, in the motion he has made, entirely misapprehends the intention of the Bill, and what the Bill would actually accomplish if carried into force. I look upon this measure as granting a very large extension of the franchise—giving the privilege to many thousands of persons who have hitherto not enjoyed the right of voting for members of the House of Commons. I believe in some few cases it may prove to be a Bill disfranchising some who have hitherto had a vote ; but when we look at the fact that the qualification is placed so very low, I think that no valid objections can possibly be urged against it. I feel myself that it is a very unfortunate thing that the concession has been made which we find embodied in this Bill. Strongly as I would like to protect the rights of every man and to disfranchise none, still the matter is such an important one, the bringing of the franchise into one uniform system, that I think it is a pity that in the case of Prince Edward Island and British Columbia there has been a departure from this rule of uniformity. I fully sympathize with the motive that led to that departure, a desire to act with the greatest liberality, and allow a defect in the measure for the purpose of doing justice to those people. When we look at the franchise in Prince Edward Island, in the first place we see there will be a voters' list on that very low basis which is to prevail throughout the Dominion ; then there is a provision that those who are not qualified on that basis will have the same right to vote that they enjoy to-day. Now if that provision were not made, I believe that before the next general election takes place for the House of Commons we would not find the name of a single one of those who now enjoy the vote absent from