

franchise upon every resident in this Province who is 21 years of age. The

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of all is that which is included in the word household r. Hereafter, if this Bill becomes law, every man who is a tenant, every man who occupies a separate dwelling-house, even though it be only a part of one house, so long as it has a separate entrance, no matter how he occupies it, whether as a tenant, occupant or owner, no matter what its value may be, will hereafter, provided that it is his residence in the sense in which this Act requires, have the right to vote. Now, gentlemen on both sides of this House will see what a vast advance that is on the law as it stands to-day. The Act now provides that no man can vote unless he has \$400 worth of property in cities, \$300 worth in cities and \$200 worth in incorporated villages and townships. Hereafter there will be no question of value at all. Hereafter there will be required nothing of a voter except that he is rated as a householder. Well, then, next to that the broadest basis, I think, is that which gives the right to vote to every man who has \$300 by way of income or wages. Heretofore the right to vote was limited to an income of \$100, and then it could only be exercised by those who were so assessed who paid the taxes to which they were liable to being assessed. So in these two features we have extended the franchise so far as to make it almost equal to manhood suffrage. It would be extremely hard to find any class in this country who under one or other of these two broad provisions of which I am speaking will not have the qualifications necessary to entitle them to vote at Parliamentary elections. But we are extending the franchise in other directions. Hereafter every man who is assessed for \$200 in cities and towns, whether as owner, tenant, or occupant, will be entitled to vote, and in incorporated villages and townships the assessed value will be reduced to \$100. The farmers' sons' franchise will be no longer known by that name but by the name of the landholders' franchise.

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until not only the sons but the grandsons of owners, and the sons-in-law of owners shall have the right to vote; in other words we intend putting a premium on mothers-in-law in this country. But we propose to give a vote also to the sons of those who are tenants. Hitherto the franchise has been confined to the sons of farmers who owned the land. By this Bill we propose to give it to the son of a farmer even though his father is not the owner of the land, provided the father is occupying a separate dwelling. In all municipalities the franchise will be of the same character. That is to say, that the son, grandson, or the son-in-law, or any man who is assessed for \$400 in cities or towns, or \$200 in incorporated villages, will be entitled to vote with him on that property. Hon. gentlemen will see that this is a very extensive addition to the franchise, because hitherto a farmer's son could only vote provided he appeared as joint owner. In other words, he could not vote unless the farm was assessed for \$400, and then only one son could vote. Two sons could vote on a farm assessed for \$600, three on a farm assessed for \$800, and a farm had to be assessed for \$1,000 to allow four to vote. This Bill will extend to every son of every father who either owns or who occupies land as a tenant, because it will be difficult to find any man who is not assessed for \$200 upon his farm, and it will be equally difficult to find any respectable family occupying a house which is not assessed for \$100 in villages, and \$200 in cities and towns. He now proceeded to compare the Bill with the proposition which had come from the Opposition as to the franchise, and showed that the Bill now before the House was very much more liberal in its terms and conferred the right to vote upon many more people than any proposal which had been made by Mr. Meredith or his friends. He referred to the Bill which had been introduced at Ottawa, and concluded by remarking:—A comparison will, I think, be enough to convince every reasonable man that our proposition is greatly in advance of any proposition which ever has been made for the exercise of the franchise in this country, and that it will give every man who has a right to vote—every British subject who is 21 years of age—assessed, and is fairly entitled to a vote. There will be here and there a case of a son who is not at home for four months in the year, or for some other reason will be temporarily disqualified. But taking it all in all there will be no one in this country who for more than one general election will be debarred from exercising the franchise. This will be practically the greatest period that a man could be debarred from voting, and I think that the Bill is an ample redemption of the pledge we gave to the House and the country. I therefore confidently move the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. MEREDITH said that he would first refer to a few of the lines which divided opinion as to the basis upon which the franchise should rest. At a very early period in the existence of that House he had entertained very liberal views with regard to the franchise. In 1873 he, with two other members, voted for what was practically manhood suffrage. He might, therefore, congratulate

himself upon the great advance made by hon. gentlemen opposite in the direction of what he at that time thought they should move. The classes whose opinion differed on this question might be divided into two: those who held that property should be the basis of the franchise, and those who held that the man should be the basis. For the first opinion he had but little sympathy. The idea of property as a basis had come down to them largely from feudal times. There were others who held that where property had been recognized it was not on account of the property itself, but as a test—an uncertain one—of the intelligence of the voter. In these modern days every intelligent man in the country who had the means of forming an intelligent judgment upon the affairs of the country, and willing to obey the laws, should have a voice in framing these laws. (Cheers.) Practically the recognition of property as a basis had been abandoned in this country by the adoption of farmers' sons and income franchises. Now these were reasons to his mind making it a question as to whether they should retain this remnant of ancient rule which was more honoured in the breach than in the observance, and whether they should not give to every citizen willing to obey the law the right to have a voice in framing the laws of his country. Upon this side of the line dividing us from the United States the young man has no voice in regulating the affairs of this country, he being for political purposes a nonentity, while on the other side of the line every young man of the age of 21 years had a voice in advancing the interest of the country. It was, therefore, of the utmost importance that young men of this country should be entrusted with the franchise independent altogether of the property qualification. Hon. gentlemen opposite had for years resisted the principles contained in this bill. In 1877, when the farmers' sons' franchise was introduced, Mr. Cameron moved in amendment to that bill the following:—

While farmers' sons, from their intelligence and personal qualifications, are as well entitled to an elective franchise as any other class not possessing the requisite property or income qualifications, still, to confer upon them this privilege, solely in right of their fathers' property, and without the qualification that would entitle the sons of any other of her Majesty's subjects to the right of voting, would be to confer special privileges upon them and to discriminate between different classes of the people, contrary to the genius and spirit of our constitution, and in derogation of the equal rights of all.

This proposition was voted down. Hon. gentlemen said that while we give the farmers' sons the franchise we will deny it to the sons of other classes of men. (Applause.) They were compelled at this late stage to admit that the proposition of the Opposition had been correct and that they had been wrong. What justification could they make to the country for having deprived the classes referred to of the franchise for so long a time? The hon. gentlemen then passed a measure conferring an income franchise, but they emasculated this by restrictions in regard to taxation. The Opposition contended that the measure of a man's intelligence to vote was his receipt of a certain income, and not the fact of his paying taxes, and proposed that the bond upon him requiring him to pay from \$4 to \$8 in taxes before he could vote should be removed. This very reasonable proposition was also voted down by the Government majority. What were hon. gentlemen compelled to do now? They had to admit that the Opposition were perfectly right and that during all these years from 1873 they had been excluding a class of young men from the exercise of the franchise by means which they had now to admit had been unjust. Yet they claimed that they were the Liberals who had always been desirous of extending the franchise. Last session the Speech from the Throne commended to the consideration of the House a measure for the extension of the franchise, yet they brought none down. The hon. gentleman said this measure practically meant universal suffrage. But what kind of a bill did he give? It would take all the ingenuity of a Philadelphia lawyer to make it out. It had all sorts of fancy franchises, even step-sons and mothers-in-law. (Laughter and applause.) Why did he not bring in a plain manhood suffrage bill, declaring that every man of the age of 21 years who is properly registered, should be entitled to the franchise. One of the features of the present law was the power it gave to assessors. They could take away a vote from one man and give it to another. Every law which recognized property as a basis of the franchise practically placed it in the power of the assessors to give a vote to whomsoever they pleased. In a certain township a number of the Conservative electors had been assessed a couple of dollars below

the amount required for qualification. Any system which perpetuated this state of things was one which ought not to be tolerated if it could be avoided. The hon. gentleman's bill did this with its many-headed franchise. The hon. gentleman had said that the Opposition, when they formulated a policy on this question, had not been so liberal as the Government now was. Admitting that the proposition made was not so liberal as it should have been, still the Government were objecting to go even so far as that, and the Opposition had to suggest what they thought had some chance of being accepted. The Government, however, did not accept. The bill now introduced would exclude from the franchise many of the very class who were never excluded. A class of wage-earners was created, although he saw no reason for making a distinction from income except to captivate mechanics and others. These wage-earners were required to have \$300 a year income. Would there not be many students and school teachers and others of the best class of the community who would be excluded by the \$300 franchise? Every student attending the university, every person studying for a profession would be excluded unless he were a householder. Then every man had to swear he had been in receipt of \$300 during the previous year. What was to happen if a workman had been sick and deprived of work for a portion of the year? He would not be allowed to vote unless he had earned the \$300, a most unjust and unfair discrimination. At the very time when hon. gentlemen were attacking the fiscal policy of the country, and when the men affected should have a vote, they might, under this bill, be excluded. (Hear, hear.) If because of a certain policy factories were shut down, and that policy was complained of and a remedy demanded, the answer to them would be, you cannot vote, because you have not during the year past earned \$300. Hon. gentlemen should have proposed to give to every British subject in the land of the full age of 21, not disqualified, a right to vote, and hon. gentlemen on his side of the House would have cordially assisted hon. gentlemen opposite in that. That was what hon. gentlemen should have brought down instead of splitting hairs over fancy franchises. It might be said that the Conservative party in this country was by its traditions excluded from entertaining such a proposition. He repudiated any such charge. Hon. gentlemen opposite were always trying to identify the Conservative party in England with the party here. The absurdity of that was evident from the fact that many Conservatives here, if living in England, would be allies of the Reform party there. So far as he could voice correctly the opinion of the Conservative voters in this province, he held that this was a democratic country socially and politically, and they recognized that the franchise should be based on the broadest possible lines—the right of every man who was a good citizen to have a voice in the affairs of the country. (Cheers.) He challenged hon. gentlemen to point to anything in the past inconsistent with the declaration that these were the lines within which the Conservative party should move. There were other clearly marked and distinctive lines between the two parties. They of the Opposition recognized a common interest and aim between the provinces and the Dominion as a whole, which was not composed simply of an aggregation of provinces, all independent, but as having a common interest in a common centre. They differed also with respect to the proper trade policy. In order to place their views on the subject of the franchise on record he moved the following:—

That the following words be added to the motion:—“And while assenting to the second reading of the bill, and thereby to the principle that an extension of the franchise is necessary and expedient, this House desires to express its opinion that no such extension, which does not under a proper system of registration, and while excluding the criminal and non-sane classes, aliens and persons disqualified under the provisions of the Election Acts, confer the franchise upon every other male resident of the province of the full age of twenty-one years, ought to be adopted by this House.”

Hon. G. F. FRASER—What does the hon. gentleman propose, supposing this very simple proposition, as he calls it, should become law? Is it a proposition that everybody can understand? It is that the franchise shall be extended, under a proper system of registration, which shall exclude the criminal and insane classes, aliens, and persons disqualified under the provisions of the Election Act, confer the franchise upon every male resident of the Province who is of the age of 21 years? Perhaps he would not have any machinery for finding out who are the criminal classes or who are the insane. Perhaps he would not have a provision for finding out these just as there is a provision for finding out under this Bill who is earning wages amounting to \$300.