

he could not be put in jail for something ; and the man says : I am there.

Committee rose and reported progress.

It being Six o'clock, the Speaker left the Chair.

### After Recess.

The House again resolved itself into Committee.

(In the Committee.)

Mr. McDOUGALL. I do not see in the House any members in charge of the Bill.

Some hon. MEMBERS. You had better wait a little.

Mr. MONK. We were told on behalf of the Government by the Solicitor General that he intended to give the committee the policy of the Government in regard to the right of Indians to vote, which has been taken away by this Bill. I do not know whether the right hon. Premier is able to tell the committee what the policy is. It seems to me that before voting on this amendment it is important we should know the policy of the Government.

The PRIME MINISTER. I am sorry I was not in the House this afternoon when the question was discussed. There can be no doubt what the policy of the Government is on this subject. We have introduced the principle and have fought for it for many years that the franchise ought to be regulated by the provincial legislatures, that it is for them to decide whether or not the Indians should be admitted to vote or not. If it be the opinion of the legislature of the province of Ontario, for instance, that the Indians there have reached that degree of civilization when they can be entrusted with the franchise, the legislature will so enact. If the hon. gentleman had been in the House in 1885 when the present Act was introduced he would remember that, as introduced, it gave the right of the franchise to the Indians, not only in the older provinces, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, but it gave the right of suffrage also to the Indians in the North-west Territories; and it was pointed out at the time to Sir John Macdonald by Mr. Mills that, according to the Bill, as introduced, Poundmaker, who was at that time engaged in rebellion, and Big Bear, would be invested with the franchise. The Bill was modified subsequently, and Indians were granted the franchise only in the older provinces and the Indians of the North-west Territories were restrained. This shows that even according to the Act some discretion is to be exercised in this matter. Who is to exercise it? We think it should be left to the provincial legislatures. Accordingly, after this Bill becomes law, if it should become law, it would be for the legislatures of the different provinces to determine whether or not Indians should be admitted to vote. This is the policy of the Government on the subject.

Mr. FIELDING.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I am very sorry the right hon. First Minister was not in the House this afternoon, for we had a very interesting and instructive discussion on this subject, which I think it would have been well if the right hon. gentleman had been able to hear it. The policy of the Government, as stated by the hon. Solicitor General, is that the Indians shall not be enfranchised under this Bill. That was clearly stated by the hon. gentleman.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. I say they are not to be enfranchised further than they are now under the provincial laws, and the leader of the Opposition stated that under certain provisions of the Ontario law they are not entirely enfranchised. I shall have occasion to refer to that matter again.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. That was not the point at issue. The question was, will the Indians, under this Bill, be enfranchised or not. The hon. gentleman stated that they could not be enfranchised under this Bill, because under the laws of the provinces they did not enjoy the franchise, and it was under the federal law they enjoyed the franchise.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Except to a limited extent.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. That does not affect the question, because, up to a limited extent there has been no issue on this subject between the political parties. There was a very interesting discussion, as the hon. gentleman may remember, in 1885, when the federal Franchise Bill was passed, as to whether the Indians should be enfranchised or not. It was no doubt a very legitimate object for discussion on which hon. gentlemen might fairly be expected to differ. We are not in that position to-day. I want to call the attention of the committee to the position occupied by the right hon. gentleman as the leader of a Liberal Administration, whose first important act is to take away the franchise from a large body of British subjects in this Dominion who at the present time enjoy it. That is not a position upon which the right hon. gentleman will plume himself as leader of the Liberal Administration. One of the great principles of the Liberal party throughout the world has been to broaden and extend the franchise to all persons who could properly enjoy it. If the right hon. gentleman had been here to-day he would have had an instructive lesson from both sides of the House and from his friends on both sides. The hon. member for Brant (Mr. Heyd) went very fully into the question and made a very powerful argument against the disfranchisement of the Indians who now enjoy the suffrage under existing legislation, and he pointed to the fact that whatever had been the difference of opinion at the outset when any question was first considered, any doubts as to the propriety of the enfranchisement of the Indians in certain cases had been entirely removed by that