

pulsory enfranchisement of Indians as set out in Bill 14 on the following grounds:—

"1. We claim this proposed legislation is ultra vires of the Parliament of Canada.

"The Parliament of Canada obtained power only to regulate the dealings of the Crown with Indian tribes and not to break up the tribes, and destroy their status and rights, which are recognized by Imperial enactment made before the Parliament of Canada came into existence.

"2. Judging the Bill from the actual effects it would have, we see in it a most serious attack against the position of all Tribes in Canada and especially those of British Columbia for the purpose of

"(1) Breaking up the Tribes.

"(2) Destroying their status.

"(3) Preventing their obtaining recognition of the tribal rights guaranteed them by Imperial enactment.

"(4) Preventing the Nishga Tribe from proceeding with its Petition now before the Privy Council.

"(5) Breaking up the reserves so these lands may rapidly become possessed by whites.

"(6) The making of a large number of Indians vagabonds.

"3. We consider the following features of the Bill are unjust, undemocratic, and detrimental to our best interests.

"(1) The feature of Compulsion.

"(2) The unlimited and autocratic power which it is proposed to confer on the Superintendent General.

"(3) In exercise of that power the Superintendent General may at any time destroy the very existence of a Tribe by enfranchising all its members.

"(4) He may at any time on recommendation of Indian agents or others forcibly separate from the Tribe by enfranchisement any Indian who takes an independent stand or is active against the autocratic decrees of the Indian Department or its agents.

"(5) He may at any time divorce from the Tribe its best and most capable men by enfranchising them.

"(6) The Bill sets out no definite standard to be attained by individuals preparatory to enfranchisement. Not over 5 per cent of the Indians of British Columbia are educated and some Tribes have been in contact with whites only since about 1875.

"(7) The Bill does not contemplate treating with the Indian Tribes, nor does it in the slightest degree provide for the obtaining of their consent or views.

"(8) The Bill throughout ignores the rights of the Tribe and assumes that reserves and other properties belong to bands.

"(9) The Bill proposes the breaking up of the reserves without the consent of the Indians who thus have no voice in the disposal of their property.

"However advantageous any one may think Bill 14 to be, we consider it fundamentally unjust to lay violent hands on the Indian Tribe, break its status, and divide up its lands by compulsory methods. If it can be demonstrated the Bill will be advantageous to us, the only just way is to treat with us and make us parties to any arrangement.

"Bill 14 was brought before the House of Commons to be passed and made law without our views being considered and without our even being notified.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

"We strongly protest against this hasty, unreasonable and autocratic method of making laws for us without consulting us and without ascertaining whether these laws will really benefit us.

"We have a better knowledge of our own mind, our own conditions and our own requirements than the officials of the Indian Department have or can have. We are neither slaves nor children.

"We ask that in future we have the opportunity of examining and expressing our views upon all proposed laws effecting our status, our rights and our well being.

"We also ask that all proposed laws and all regulations proposed by the Indian Department affecting us be submitted to the Chief Officials of the Canadian Anthropological Division so their advice thereon may be obtained.

"In our opinion it is impossible to arrive at any satisfactory dealing with education, enfranchisement, appointment and powers of chiefs, and other matters of local self-government of Tribes without fuller enquiry and conference with the various tribes. In our late statement to the British Columbia Government, we recognize that these matters should be dealt with.

"From what we know of the Bill as now amended and before Parliament it is quite as unjust and dangerous as ever. Enfranchisement is still compulsory and therefore the effects the Bill would have remain the same. Also the autocratic power is merely shifted from a single official appointed by the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to an Indian Department majority in a board of three.

"We ask why should the Indians of Canada of all peoples known to us in the British Empire be singled out for compulsory enfranchisement, and the breaking up of their lands without their consent? Is it because we are generally speaking uneducated and helpless? What is the need of this compulsion? There are no White communities in Canada coerced in this way.

"If the Government desires to confer enfranchisement as a benefit, then why cannot Indians upon attaining some definite standard of education and advancement become enfranchised, if they so desire, without losing their status as members of their tribes and having their lands broken up? We feel that if our tribes are broken up and we can no longer act with our kin, we will lose our stability and will deteriorate. We desire that our tribes be built up and not torn down, and that we be wisely assisted to manage our own affairs within the Canadian Nation. We object most strenuously to the Government introducing Bill 14 or any other Bill affecting our welfare without first consulting us or obtaining our views as to the effects of same upon us. We should be parties to all laws affecting us—then there will be fewer mistakes on the part of the Government, and laws enacted will be much more easily carried into effect. We desire to be satisfied, happy, and progressive peoples. Let the Government help and not hinder our development."

I do not think there is anything that I need add to this statement which comes from the Indians themselves. The hon. member for Simcoe South (Mr. Boys) has intimated to us that the Indians were not consulted in this matter; and that they are known to be opposed to compulsory enfranchisement; and the committee them-