

Indian Act makes Indians living on reserves minors. These Indians cannot vote; so it will be fighting a shadow to say they shall not vote. The hon. member for Argenteuil (Mr. Abbott) said that in his opinion minors could not exercise the franchise—and that hon. gentleman is supposed to know something of law, as much, in fact, as it is safe for any one man to carry—and I think his opinion should go for something in this matter. We heard a great deal of eloquence from the Opposition on Saturday as to what the effect would be of enfranchising Indians. We were told this Bill would enfranchise the heathen Indians of the North-West, and Indians everywhere in the country. But suppose the Bill should pass as it stands, it would only apply to Indians who have become civilised and industrious members of the community, and who have become possessed of a house and farm of at least a certain value. It will not extend to the wandering Indians of the plains, but only to those having fixed habitations and living as other people do. I think hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House have taken an illiberal view of the matter. I call the attention of the committee particularly to this point, that by this motion the Indians now enfranchised, who live among white people, who have abandoned their Indian life, would be disenfranchised until they resumed their savage mode of life, again settled on the reserve and became possessed of a lot of land on the reserve. I think some hon. members the other night went a little too far in speaking of the Indians, in describing them as paupers, living on the bounty of the Government. They should have mentioned at the same time that the annuities paid the Indians were paid in accordance with solemn treaties and in payment for lands ceded to the Government. It is a right of which no government could deprive them, and which no government could make use of to gain their votes. There is one characteristic of Indians, which probably hon. gentlemen will find out, and that is that they are very often, like Irishmen, against the Government. So I do not think a Government could exercise any particular influence over them more than it could over any other people. The hon. member for North Brant (Mr. Somerville) went into the question very fully the other night. I am sorry the hon. member, who displayed much ability in debate, should not have taken a more liberal view. He said that there were 130,000 Indians in the Dominion, that this Bill would enfranchise all of them, and that the House would be filled with Indians. I do not feel any apprehension on that score. The hon. gentleman also went on to point out how the Indians were living on the bounty of the Government, and he mentioned that last year \$10,600 appeared in the estimates to be paid to Indians under the Robinson treaty. Does the hon. gentleman know how that matter stands; has he looked into the matter sufficiently to know that those Indians have been very badly treated by all Governments since the treaty was made with them? The treaty was made with them in 1850, and by that treaty it was agreed that they should receive a certain sum annually, when the sales of their lands enabled the Government to make the payment, which would amount to \$1 per head. There is now, as I am informed, and have reason to believe upwards of \$300,000 due to the Indians of lakes Superior and Huron under the Robinson treaty. They have no means of making their case known except by petition. Is it fair to shut our eyes against these grievances? If such grievances had been endured by white people they would have been heard of long ago. It was expressly stated when the treaty was entered into that the payments to the Indians were to be made out of the proceeds of the revenues of their lands. I believe both the late Government and the present Government entered into communication with the Ontario Government and insisted that that

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Government should pay this money, because it was a charge on the lands. The Ontario Government said the duty of dealing with the Indians belonged to the Dominion Government, that they had nothing to do with them and would not pay that money—I do not know that they positively refused, but they objected to the payment, putting it off from year to year, and this sum of over \$300,000 has remained due to the Indians, and they have been unable to obtain it. If that money were distributed in establishing schools and in educating the Indians, they would soon reach a sufficiently high standard to enable them to take their places, probably in this House, or at all events to exercise the franchise. And yet when \$10,600 have been voted in one year to those Indians, the hon. member for North Brant denounces it as an outrageous act, and as an evidence of the way in which the Indians are dependent on the bounty of the Government. But this payment was not a bounty or a gift. It was an amount justly due, and in fact only a fraction of the sum due. Again, the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Fleming) spoke of the troubles in the North-West in such a manner as to excite passion and prejudice against the Indians. He spoke of the rebellion having broken out, and insinuated that the Government were now about to give votes to such Indians as Pie-a-Pot. Admit that those people have been as bad as reported. Admit that they are disloyal, admit that they have gone into rebellion—admit all that, still let me ask one question. Hon. gentlemen stated the other day that the total number of Indians in this wide Dominion was 130,000, and out of this large number how many are in rebellion? A few hundreds, perhaps, and would it be just or fair to disfranchise the whole of this community, and to say that they should be punished for the faults of the few misguided men who have now taken up arms? Surely not; and however much we may condemn those men we should not allow our feelings to carry us so far as to say that this very much larger number, who are loyal and who have kept the treaties made with them, should be treated or even spoken of with injustice. As I stated before, I intend at the proper time and place to move an amendment. The clause now under consideration simply says that an Indian is a person, and I certainly think it is rather unusual to cavil so long about a single word, when, as the different clauses of the Bill come before us, there will be ample opportunity of discussing as to who shall or shall not vote. My intention is to propose that this Act shall be assimilated to the present Act of Ontario, except in a few minor particulars as to residence amongst Indians and other matters; and as hon. gentlemen opposite allude to the Ontario Act as being perfection, they will surely attach some importance to a provision similar to that which is set out in that Act. A great deal has been said by eloquent gentlemen about the tyranny of the Government. The hon. member for Queen's, Prince Edward Island (Mr. Davies) was very pathetic about it the other night. He said: Here we are going without sleep, deprived of our natural rest, until our faculties both mental and bodily are affected. It was really very touching, the eloquent way in which the hon. gentleman expressed himself. But I would ask him and others if there is not such a thing as tyranny on the part of an opposition, as well as on the part of a Government. Here they have compelled us, night after night, without the slightest compunction, to go without sleep. We have allowed them to argue this matter out to the fullest extent. But after all we could not please them; they became indignant because they were not replied to, and they went on speaking, and when they got tired speaking they went on reading stories, which would have been most interesting at the proper time and place. No doubt they were very interesting, but still people half asleep I hardly think could properly appreciate them. I hope the time will soon come when we will get a little further on with this Bill,