

federal and state, there is only one legislature which determines the franchise, and that is the state legislature, equivalent to the provincial legislature here. But if we are to deal with the question as an abstract question, if we are to determine whether the Indians should have the right to vote or not, I would not for my part have any objections to giving them that right after the testimony we have heard of the qualifications of the Indians to exercise the franchise. But in any well regulated system of government the proper thing must be done, not alone because it is just per se, but the proper thing must be done by the proper authorities. It is only a few days ago that we had a discussion in this House upon a Sabbath Observance Bill, a very good measure in itself. But this measure was killed because a large majority of the members were of the opinion that this Parliament was not the proper authority to legislate upon that question, that it was more properly the concern of the local legislature, and that it was for them to deal with it. So it is with this question as to whether the Indians ought to be admitted to the right to vote. It is a question which should not be debated upon the floor of this Parliament, it is a question which concerns the local legislatures. It may be that the Indian is as well qualified as the white man to vote, I do not dispute the statement at all. But with this question, as with the Sabbath Observance Bill, this is not the place to discuss it. There are provinces where it may be advisable that the Indians should have the right to vote, but under this very law which we are now engaged in repealing, these very questions were determined in one way for one set of Indians and in another way for another set of Indians. Under this very Act which we are repealing, the franchise was given to the Indians in the older provinces, and was refused to the Indians of the North-west Territories. Why? If the Indians should have the right to vote in one province, why should they not have it in another province? If, as a matter of justice, they should have the right to vote in Ontario and Quebec, why should they not, as a matter of justice, have the right to vote in the province of Manitoba? I stated that under the Franchise Act the enfranchisement of the Indians does not extend to the province of Manitoba. There must be some reason for that fact. The reason is that Parliament thought the Indians were not yet sufficiently advanced in civilization that they could safely be given the right of the franchise. What does this prove? It proves that the right of voting is a local question, depending on the education of the people. And who is to determine that question? Is it not the legislature of each province? Why have we this complicated system of federal government, under which power to legislate on certain subjects is given to the local legislatures, while power to legislate on other subjects is given

to this Parliament? Because there are certain subjects which can better be treated on local lines. Take the question of education. Whoever thought it would be right that the question of education should be determined by this Parliament? No one believes that would have been wise. It is a question properly allotted to the local legislatures, because a system that might suit one province might not suit another. So it is with the question of the franchise. But, as I said a moment ago, if we were called upon to determine as an abstract question whether the Indians could vote or not vote, I would be fully prepared, after the testimony given this afternoon that they were fully competent to grant the franchise to them. But if the Indians are qualified to vote, as has been stated this afternoon, the local legislatures will deal with that question and give them the right to vote, and then hon. gentlemen will be satisfied. If in Ontario, for instance, the Indians are properly qualified to vote, the legislature—the Liberal party, which, thank heaven, are in power in that province—will deal with the question. And it will be the same in Manitoba. If the people are satisfied that the Indians who live with them are competent to take hold of the franchise, it will be granted them. But the hon. gentleman declared that the Liberal Government were about to disfranchise the Indians. I tell the hon. gentleman that the policy of the Liberal party, the principles of the Liberal party is not to disfranchise the Indians, but it is to refer that question to the authority competent to deal with it. But I will give the hon. gentleman the policy of his party. He referred to the Bill introduced by Sir John Thompson, and he wanted us to go back to that Bill and, if I understood him correctly, he wished to embody the provisions in this Bill. I am not doing an injustice in stating that the hon. gentleman wanted the Government to adopt the provision in the Bill of Sir John Thompson, who had taken the provincial lists as the basis and on that wanted the list for the Dominion to be prepared. There was a paragraph, an enactment in the Bill introduced by Sir John Thompson, with this end in view, which I commend to the hon. gentleman. Subsection 2 of section 4 provided:

No Indian shall be qualified to have his name upon the list of voters unless he is enfranchised within the meaning of the Indian Act.

This is the same provision as is contained in the law of Ontario.

Enfranchised Indians, whether wholly or partly of Indian blood, shall be entitled to vote without having a property qualification.

Under the Ontario law an enfranchised Indian can vote. If the hon. gentleman had his will, he would have a different state of things prevailing: he is going back on the policy of his predecessor, Sir John Thomp-