

Mr. CLANCY. Then, you have been mistaken?

Mr. LISTER. How?

Mr. CLANCY. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Lister) opposed the enfranchisement of the Indians very strongly.

Mr. LISTER. No, not very strongly. I have thought as I think now, that if the Indians were to have the vote, the Government should have freed them from the position they then occupied, but the Government thought differently and granted them the franchise. They gave them full rights of citizenship, and now we propose to take those rights away from them.

An hon. MEMBER. No.

Mr. LISTER. Yes, unless the local government passes an Act extending the right to them, which we have no guarantee they will do. The result will be that the Indians who have for years exercised this right will be deprived of it. After giving a class of the population the right to exercise the franchise, that right should not be taken away from them. Therefore, I shall support the amendment.

Mr. MACLEAN. I think that the argument the hon. gentleman has just put forward shows the weakness of this whole Bill. The fact that provincial legislatures can do things that will deprive us in effect of a federal franchise, is the weakness of the whole case, and shows the danger to this Canadian people as it has never been presented before. I should like to see the Indians have their vote. I know many of them on the Grand River reservation, they are intelligent farmers and well qualified to exercise the franchise. But the argument put forward by the hon. gentleman proves what we on this side have always said, and would almost go so far as to justify another body in defending the Canadian people in the matter of their franchise. I hope now that this question is put that the greatest care will be taken to insert some provision under which the provincial legislature cannot rob the Canadian people of the management of their own franchise.

Mr. CHARLTON. I do not think it can be said that this Bill or the action of this House proposes to take from any class of the community the right of the franchise. This Bill merely proposes to abdicate the exercise of a power to the provincial government. We are dealing with a question irrelevant to the issue when we talk about the right of Indians or anybody else to be on the list, for we propose to adopt the principle that we will not meddle with the formation of the lists. The Government in 1885 passed a franchise law and proceeded to establish a separate set of machinery for the purpose of having a voters' list for the Dominion. In view of all the evils that followed this action, we now propose to declare that that

was a step which was not in the interest of the people.

The Bill proceeds upon the assumption that the condition of things that existed in this Dominion for eighteen years after confederation, when the elections were held upon the provincial lists, was a condition of things we had better return to. During that eighteen years there was not the slightest objection to the operation of that principle. There was never any serious objection raised in this House or in this country that the provinces had not dealt properly or fairly with any element of the population in their regulation of the matter of the franchise. I repeat that we are simply going back, by the provisions of this Bill, to the old regulations which worked smoothly and to the public satisfaction for the first eighteen years of the life of this confederation. It was unfortunate when that condition of things was set aside, without reason, without application upon the part of any element of society in Canada that that step should be taken. We have gone on under the operation of this Bill now for many years. We have found it to be costly and unworkable. We have only had, I think, four revisions since 1885; we held the last two elections on voters' lists two years old, when no citizen of Canada under twenty-three years of age had a right to vote. Now, we are going back to the old principle, relegating to the provinces the power to deal with this question; in point of fact, saying to the provinces: the right of representation in your ridings and for your people in this House is a civil right over which you may exercise jurisdiction, stating by your laws who shall or shall not vote, and we will accept your voters' lists for the sake of uniformity, for the sake of avoiding difficulties, injustices and expenses. Now, if we are going to take up that policy, we have got to follow it out right straight to its conclusion. If we are going to break in upon that principle by providing that this class in any province who do not have votes shall have votes, and that that class who do not have votes shall have votes, we may as well sweep away the whole Bill, and have a Dominion Franchise Act. We either want a Dominion Franchise Act or we want to put this matter back in charge of the provinces and allow the voters' lists of the provinces to be the voters' lists for elections in the Dominion. The issue is a clean-cut one, a distinct one. So far as the Indians are concerned, I have not a word to say against them. There is not an Indian in Brant county, and there is not an Indian in the county of Lambton, who cannot be a citizen if he chooses to become so. But I object to giving to a class of the population who are living in tribal relations and who are not citizens of this country, special rights that belong to me. If I do not have