

is required to enable a white man to vote, will be also entitled to vote. The First Minister stated on Saturday that this was a mere dispute as to a definition, that he simply proposed to say that an Indian was a person, and that we had had three or four days' discussion on that point. But the third and fourth sections of the Act provide that every British subject over twenty-one years of age, being a male, and being the owner or occupant of property of a certain value, is entitled to vote. This would include Indians, and I agree with the First Minister that, to exclude Indians from that provision who are resident on their tribal reservations, it would be necessary to provide that they shall not be included, but he proposes to insert the word "Indian" here in order to remove all doubt, and to make it clear that all Indians, whether enfranchised or not, whether upon reservations or not, so long as they fulfil the other conditions, are included. I have observed that the Government newspapers have been careful to avoid the discussion of this subject. The *Montreal Gazette* is the only one that I can find that has alluded to the subject, and that declared that the Indians within the Provinces, as distinguished from the Indians in the North-West Territories, are competent to exercise the franchise. What difference is there between the bands of Crow Quill or White Cap, who reside in the Province of Manitoba, and those of Big Bear, Pie-a-Pot, and Poundmaker, who reside in the Territories? The moral and mental condition of those tribes is the same. The Indians on those reservations are there under contract or compact with the Government, which gives to the Indian sufficient title of occupation to enable him to vote if the property which is in his possession is of the necessary value. Now, that being the case, it is perfectly clear that those Indians who reside upon reservations in British Columbia, Manitoba, and other Provinces, by this Act, will be voters for the election of members to the House of Commons, if they have in their possession property to the value of \$150, or any of the other qualifications required. By the amendment I offer I do not propose to enfranchise the emancipated and enfranchised Indian; the Indian who has a separate holding, who is free from Government control, who has the legal capacity to make a contract and to assume the obligations of the white man, will be entitled to vote. I make no distinction between a white man and an Indian, except that distinction which the law has already drawn. What is the condition in which the hon. gentleman has put the Indian by the Indian Act? He has declared that he is not competent to take charge of his own affairs, that he is not competent to hold real estate or to make a contract; he is not required to pay taxes; he stands in a wholly different position from any other member of the community; he is wholly without any of those qualities which will enable him to discharge his duty as a citizen and entitle him to exercise the electoral franchise. I am not going now to discuss all those qualities which it is necessary for a person to possess in order to be entrusted with so high and important an element of freemen as the electoral franchise; but I am calling the attention of the committee, so that there may be no doubt about the matter, to the fact that the enfranchised Indian, the ward of the Government, the man who resides upon a reservation, whether he has a location ticket or not, if the piece of land he occupies and cultivates is of the value required here, will be entitled to have his name put upon the voters' list and to exercise the franchise. Now, I say that the great majority of Indians are not in a fit condition to exercise the electoral franchise. I have already read an extract from the report of the First Minister, four years ago, pointing to the fact that the Indian is not able to carry out municipal institutions, that he has not the intellectual capacity; that however simple you may make those institutions, they would be to him unworkable; and the man who is so low in the scale of intelligence as to be unable to do that, is to be put upon the voters' list and

197

to exercise the franchise. The hon. member for Kent, New Brunswick (Mr. Landry) and the hon. member for King's, New Brunswick (Mr. Foster), have undertaken to leave upon the committee the impression that that was not the intention of the law. I say the intention is perfectly plain. I say it is plain that the Indian, if this Bill is carried in its present form, is entitled to exercise the electoral franchise. To that I am opposed; to that I believe the great majority of this House, if they voted freely, are opposed. I think that when we give an Indian, who assumes the duties that devolve upon white men, the right to the franchise; when we put him upon a footing of equality, we do all that even morality or prudence requires at our hands. Indeed, we admit by the manner in which we deal with him, by the special provision made in his behalf in our constitution, by the large expense we incur in order to support him—because we find that in the majority of cases he is unable to support himself—in all these things we admit he is intellectually, industrially, socially, in every way, the inferior of the rest of the population. If we take the best of them and emancipate them, you give them the same rights that you do the white men; and when you do that, if he is possessed of the electoral franchise upon the same condition as any other member of the community, I think we do all that we ought to do in the matter. By the amendment I have put in your hands it is provided that an Indian who is enfranchised, who has the same civil capacities as any other person, who has the same qualifications, as far as property is concerned, shall have the electoral franchise; and I think it would be a gross outrage to confer it upon any other.

Mr. DAWSON. I would like the House thoroughly to understand what the effect of the motion before us will be. The case has not been fairly stated by the Opposition side, nor has this motion now before the House been properly considered. What would be its effect if it were carried? The Indian Act says:

"The term 'enfranchised Indian' means any Indian, his wife, or minor, unmarried child, who has received letters patent granting him in fee-simple any portion of the reserve which may have been allotted to him."

That applies solely to the reserve: it applies solely to Indians living on reserves. The system they have to adopt to become enfranchised, the forms they have to go through, apply solely to Indians living on reserves. Now there is a large class of Indians, of people known as Indians, who live outside the reserves. We have a great many of them in every part of Ontario. There are professional men among those Indians who have abandoned their Indian life entirely, and live as white people do. There are among them boat builders, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, carpenters, and Indian farmers—all living among white people, and who now exercise the franchise. Now if this motion before the House were adopted, what would be the effect? The effect would be that all this class of Indians whom I have mentioned, would be obliged to go upon reserves, take up a little location and occupy it for three years, and go through a probationary term before they could exercise the franchise. It would disfranchise them. It is a most illiberal motion, as far as I can see. Now, I do not consider that this present Bill extends the franchise to Indians in the manner that has been set forth by the Opposition. I think for my own part, that it is not an exceedingly liberal measure as it is, and I propose to offer an amendment to the Bill, in its proper place, and define clearly what Indians, in my opinion, should have a right to vote. Clause 4 of the Bill defines the qualification thus:

"Of the age of twenty-one years and is not by this Act, or by any law of the Dominion of Canada, disqualified or prevented from voting."

Now, this Act prevents some of them from voting, because it is, I believe, an established point that minors cannot vote. The