

have steadily stood by the Government ever since the right of the franchise has been conferred on them. In the election of 1891, out of 414 on the lists 214 voted—102 for the Liberal party and 112 against. In the election of 1896, 647 were on the roll. The number had been increased by over 200. Of these 400 voted, showing that a very large proportion of those who had the right to vote, exercises that right. Well, at the last election out of 647 on the roll, 437 cast their vote.

Mr. BERGERON. How did they vote ?

Mr. HEYD. My modesty prevents me from saying.

An hon. MEMBER. He raked them in.

Mr. HEYD. Some hon. gentleman says, I raked them in. I am happy to-day that I got a majority. The Indians probably thought that they ought to stand by the Government, and they stood by it in good stead, so far as I was concerned. Under the circumstances, I believe that their right to the franchise should be continued. And I beg to move the following resolution :—

That after the word "election" in the thirty-third line of the Bill, at the end of subdivision "a," the following words be added :—

"Provided that, notwithstanding any provincial enactment, the Six Nation Indians and other Indian tribes that have the right to vote, under the Electoral Franchise Act of 48-49 Victoria, chap. 40, and shall be entitled to vote at any election for the Dominion Parliament."

Now, I desire, before I sit down, to make the plain statement that these Indians are educated, in a great many instances, that on the reserve in the county from which I come there are ten schools in active operation, and there is also an industrial school which has 125 pupils. Some of these men who are being deprived of their vote are amongst the most intelligent people of Canada. While many among them have probably not had the advantage of education, they all know what they are doing when they come to vote for. In the last election, out of the large number, 442 that cast their votes, there was only two spoiled and three rejected ballots, being a much smaller proportion, I believe, than amongst the white population in any part of the Dominion. Believing that these Indians are intelligent, and that they are qualified to vote, and as they have exercised the franchise in four general elections, I stand up and ask that they shall have that right conceded to them under this Bill.

Sir ADOLPHE CARON. I would be prepared to vote in favour of this motion for this reason—I feel that now that the franchise has been granted to the Indians in Canada, it would be a retrograde step to deprive them of it. I believe it is almost an unheard of thing for the franchise, once conceded, to be taken away from the people who have enjoyed it.

Mr. HEYD.

Mr. QUINN. This is only for a portion of the Indians.

Sir ADOLPHE CARON. I do not so understand it. I understand that it includes all the Indians that have the right to vote under the existing franchise law. It is that principle that I support.

Mr. QUINN. I think my hon. friend (Sir Adolphe Caron) is mistaken.

Mr. BERGERON. The amendment applies only to the Indians in the county of Brant.

Mr. LISTER. I take it that it does not matter to what county the Indian belongs. I believe that the amendment introduced by my hon. friend from Brant (Mr. Heyd) ought to become part of the Bill in some shape, though, perhaps, as drafted, it cannot be incorporated at the present moment. There is a principle in this matter. We are not to consider whether the granting of the franchise to the Indians was a wise step or not. We are not now to consider whether the Government of that day, in view of the fact that the Indians were the wards of the Government, should have given the franchise to the Indians. We are face to face with the fact that it has been the law for the past twelve or fourteen years, and that the Indians have exercised the right to vote during all that time, and that it is now proposed by the Bill under consideration to take away from them this privilege. I think I may fairly challenge the Government to produce an instance in which the franchise has been given to a class of the population and afterwards taken away from them by the law. So far as the right of these people is concerned, it is not of very much consequence in the consideration of the present question, whether they have exercised the right which was given to them wisely or not. They have had the same right as every other voter in the Dominion of Canada. But I may say to the House that my experience is that the Indians upon the reservation in my county have exercised that right as wisely, as prudently and as intelligently as any other class of the people in the county of Lambton. I may say to you, Mr. Chairman, that the tribe in the county of Lambton differs from that in Brant inasmuch as they have, for many years, elected their own chiefs and other officers, and in every contest that has taken place these Indians have taken an active and intelligent part in the election in which they have had a right to vote. As an instance of their great intelligence, I may say that, notwithstanding the fact of the old Government being in power, I have always received a majority of the votes of the Indians upon that reservation. That proves one thing—it proves that the influence which it was supposed the Government would have had on the Indians has not in fact existed, but that the Indians, notwithstanding that they are wards of the Government, have been sufficiently independent to vote as they thought proper.