

*Atlantic Provinces Power Development*

he looks upon us with a somewhat jaundiced eye. In making reference to the bar association resolution it goes on to point out that the former government of Canada in the section of the Indian Act which allows for compulsory enfranchisement has made certain provisions which should be removed and that this would allow the Indian wishing to vote to retain his trust assets and treaty rights by merely waiving the right to freedom of taxation. In the preamble to the resolution they point out that the present system by which he may enjoy his franchise is a rather complicated one and which has caused a certain mistrust of those people who have administered the act.

I come now to the point I wish to make. The Indian association of the province of Alberta has, on more than one occasion, registered concern at the suggestion of a completely free franchise of those Indians who come under their jurisdiction of this responsible body. While they have been given assurance that there is going to be no loss of treaty rights and no suggestion that they will not be able to enjoy the status which they have enjoyed in the past, the Indians look back at such incidents—and I hesitate to introduce them at this point—such as the Hobbema incident. They very seriously question—and I am now referring to government of Canada—the intent of the administrators of this act.

Therefore, while I am supporting this suggestion I have this one reservation; that the intention must be made abundantly clear and that we have absolutely no strings attached in this legislation. It must be clear that we do not intend to remove any of the privileges they have. Here of course I cannot speak for future governments because public sentiment being as it is a future government may look upon this question in a different manner, but I believe it is essential in introducing, accepting or rejecting a bill of this nature that we do not lose sight of the fact that the Indians on the reserve and those who have been away from it, regardless of the legislation we introduce, have been suspicious of some of these measures. It is therefore necessary in explaining our purpose to make it clear that we do not intend by giving one freedom to take away another.

I, therefore, with that single qualification give support to this legislation, as one who has met many of these fine men in the hope that the day is not far away when, as has been suggested by the very nature of this bill, they will assume and assume gladly their full responsibilities and rights as Canadian citizens.

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**Mr. J. H. Harrison (Meadow Lake):** In the two or three moments I have left before six o'clock I would like to join this happy band of warriors in discussion of this particular bill.

From what I have gathered from the members who have preceded me, there seems to be an impression that Indians cannot vote in the federal elections in this country and that is far from the case.

**Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if on a point of privilege I might say that if the hon. member has gained that impression it is certainly not in accordance with our intention. I just wish to make that clear.

**Mr. Harrison:** In at least 50 per cent of my constituency Indians are able to exercise their franchise if they so desire. I do not contend they all do. In fact, as the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Smith) has said, they approach the matter with some diffidence. However, they have the right in my constituency and have had that right for years owing to the fact that Indians qualify for the federal franchise provided they are not living on a reserve. If you get far enough north there are no reserves and therefore they can vote.

I have had some experience with these people and in each election they do vote to a larger extent, thus exercising their franchise. I feel they do so as well as people in other parts of this country and certainly they divide their allegiance between the various parties. I think this is a good bill and I feel it could very well be adopted by the government, or something similar to it, so as to give the franchise to Indians in all parts of Canada. Whether they live in the north of a riding or in the south of a riding should make no difference as to whether they vote or do not vote.

**Mr. Speaker:** It being six o'clock the house will now revert to the business which was interrupted at five o'clock.

**POWER****ATLANTIC PROVINCES—LEGISLATION RESPECTING THERMAL PROJECTS**

The house resumed consideration in committee of Bill No. 244, to provide assistance in respect of electrical power development in the Atlantic provinces—Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle)—Mr. Chown in the chair.

On clause 1—*Short title.*

At six o'clock the committee took recess.