

Canada Elections Act

those on the Six Nations reserve spend considerable time in New York state; and I could foresee considerable difficulty in ever enumerating these people for the voters' list. I might go on further and say that they come and go across the border at will. They work a short time in New York state and a short time in Canada and it has been extremely difficult ever to get a correct enumeration or a correct count of the population of Indians on the Six Nations reserve for that reason.

I am just giving my own ideas, Mr. Speaker, as I have read about and observed the actions of the Indians near and in the city of Brantford. I believe they are more interested in some amendments to other parts of the Indian Act for their own benefit before they think about the vote. I should like to read you another letter which was written by another Indian hereditary chief and which was printed in our local paper, namely the *Brantford Expositor*, not so long ago. This same gentleman is concerned about the vote for Indians. He feels that before dealing with the vote for Indians we should have some different legislation with regard to the Indian Act. I do not know whether or not I am in order in reading this letter, but it points out the views held by this one hereditary chief with regard to some of the changes that should be made in the Indian Act before we stress the vote for Indians. This letter is written by Norman S. Powless. He is one of the hereditary chiefs about whom I just spoke. The letter appears under the heading "Readers' Views on the Indian Act, Speed Traps and People on Buses" and it reads as follows:

Sir: Having abstained from writing to you for six years, may I prove once again the unfair practices of the peace officer in our midst?

How is it that when any peace officer arrests a paleface violator of the law on Six Nations territory reference is immediately made concerning what I have called before and find necessary to repeat this alien legislation, the Indian Act.

May I also repeat that we are not Indians, nor are we connected with India or its people in any manner, shape or form. Yet the authorities stubbornly impose this vicious piece of legislation on us, an innocent race.

The Indian Act considers this race to be a race of minors, but let a native of the Six Nations territory make an infraction of the law, whether the offence be minor or serious, and the offender is no longer considered a minor but is given the maximum penalty the paleface law provides.

This is a further proof that this alien legislation, the Indian Act, is not fit to be imposed on any human race, nor by police or police officers.

Why is it permitted to sell liquor to natives of the Six Nations territory and allow them to bring it out? They are no further ahead, as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police await them as soon as they leave for home. Arrest is then made whether they are violent or minding their own business, as long as their breath smells of liquor.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have been listening to what the hon. member has been reading and I must say that it does not seem to bear directly on the principle of the bill.

Mr. Written: Mr. Speaker, I was really reading this letter because it contains some points that this gentleman, Mr. Powless, is trying to make with regard to what should be done about the Indian Act before we go ahead with giving the Indians the vote. He believes that we should first clean up some of what in his opinion are indiscretions in the Indian Act. However, if you feel that is not relevant to the subject of votes for Indians, Mr. Speaker, I will let it go and will abide by your rules.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say again that I congratulate the hon. member for Skeena on bringing in this bill. I support most heartily any legislation that would be of benefit to my neighbours in Brant county. The only question in my mind is whether this bill is not a little bit premature inasmuch as there is on the order paper a government resolution providing for the appointment of a committee to go over the Indian Act completely. I hope this resolution will go through, that the committee will be set up and that the federal vote for the Indians will be given careful consideration. I would also recommend that responsible Indian leaders from all the bands and reserves be called in and that their views be heard and received by the committee, not the superintendent appointed by the government but the people themselves. Then I am sure we will get their views not only on this bill with regard to the right to vote, but on many other problems they have as well.

In closing, I would like to mention the good co-operation that I and the council of the township of Brantford always received from the Six Nations when I was reeve and warden of the county, and I am sure a solution to their problem of voting, and other problems also, can be worked out with consultation and patience with the leaders of the different bands all across Canada.

Mr. F. J. Bigg (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, this amendment to the act proposes to enfranchise all Indians. There may be a question whether or not this can legally be done as far as Indians are concerned. No doubt we can pass a law in this house which will enfranchise all Indians. But what does it do in fact? It may be only a pious wish, because the Indians, at least the Indians under treaties, are sovereign nations. I speak principally for the western Indians, because I have lived with them, I have dealt with them as a law enforcement officer and as a neighbour, and I know something of the way