

*Canada Elections Act*

the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) for introducing this bill to the house. Since I have been a member of this house I have noted that he has taken a great interest in Indian affairs. While I do not subscribe to some of the thoughts that he expresses, certainly he is to be commended for his interest in Indians and their problems in this country. I quite agree with the principle of this bill because I believe the large number of Indians spread across this vast country of ours should have the opportunity of going to the polls and voting for the candidate of their choice.

I believe these people should have this right because certainly they are the first citizens of this land and the oldest allies of Great Britain here in Canada. When we think of the cold, hunger, persecution and dangers that these people endured in years gone by as our allies, it seems the least we could do for the present generation is to give them the right to vote freely, without fear of losing their rights, in federal elections. Some years have elapsed since some of the provinces gave the Indians the right to vote. I believe it was in 1949 British Columbia gave them the right; 1953 in Ontario and 1954 in Manitoba, to mention two or three of the provinces.

I can speak only for the reserve situated in my home county of Brant. The Hon. Harry Nixon, provincial member for that constituency, has taken a great interest in the affairs of the Six Nations reserve by trying to get the Indians to exercise their franchise. In the federal field, the hon. member for Brant-Haldimand (Mr. Charlton) represents these Indians here, and the members of the reserve honoured him a short time ago for the interest he has taken in them by making him an honorary chief. I have hoped for some time that a member of the Six Nations would be elected, either to the Ontario house or the federal house, because then he could more readily explain the thoughts and ambitions of his people to the other elected representatives.

The Six Nations reserve, partly in our county, is the largest reserve population-wise in Ontario. While it is not all confined to the township of Tuscarora, the biggest part of it is. On this reserve we have the problem of the elected council who do the business of the reserve and the hereditary council of chiefs of the long house who do not recognize the elected council as being the governing body. This is where the problem of federal voting would come in. The people who follow the elected council would probably give it serious consideration while those who follow the hereditary chiefs

[Mr. Wratten.]

council would not accept it and would view the whole proceedings with some alarm.

Some of these people believe that they should not enter into any voting proceedings as they feel that they are a separate league of nations living in Canada, allies of the crown, governing themselves as far as possible and should not be called upon to vote in federal elections. Indeed, some time ago, when the national council of women held their convention they passed a resolution. We all know that the local council of women are a good group of people in the various communities in which they have these councils and the resolutions which they bring forward are worthy of consideration by the members of this house and of other houses. They brought forward a resolution urging that the Indians be granted the vote. I have here a statement sent in by one of the hereditary chiefs of the Six Nations reserve. He is very blunt in this statement. Right at the start of it he tells the national council of women to mind their own business. If I may, I should like to read just a short statement that the gentleman made. This is Mr. Arthur Anderson, senior. He is secretary of the hereditary chiefs council. This press report states:

A spokesman for the Six Nations hereditary council said today that the national council of women should mind its own business on the question of a vote for Indians.

Arthur Anderson, Sr., secretary of the fiercely proud "old guard" of the Six Nations, said women's organizations have no right to interfere.

The national council of women passed a resolution at its convention, urging the federal government to give Canada's Indians a vote in federal elections.

"We don't want a vote," Mr. Anderson said. "Of what benefit would it be to us?"

"We were here long before the white men were. We were instrumental in the very existence of this country.

"As far as the federal government is concerned let them leave us alone, and we'll leave them alone."

The statement follows the hereditary council's policy of opposing government efforts to integrate the Indians with the rest of Canada.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the view of one of the hereditary chiefs of the Six Nations reserve and it represents the thinking of some of the people on the reserve with regard to the federal vote and what they think is interference in their own affairs. I know that the national council of women passed this resolution in good faith, thinking they were doing the Indians a good turn, if I may say so, just as we do when we bring in this bill to try to grant them the right to vote in federal elections.

A large number of other people on the reserve could not care less about the vote. As the Indian people have the right to cross the United States-Canadian border at will,