

*Indian Act Amendment*

A reading of the clause of the Dominion Elections Act just quoted by the Minister of Justice would indicate that any Indian who did not ordinarily reside on a reserve had the right of franchise.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Oh no.

Mr. ARTHURS: Any Indian not ordinarily resident upon a reserve is excepted from the disabilities applying to the Indian upon the reserve. I think I am correct in that, and certainly the Indians who are not under treaty would very largely out-number the Eskimos of Canada. So all these arguments would apply equally to men living in the northern parts of this Dominion.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): My hon. friend is wrong, if he will permit me. The Indians have not the franchise unless they are enfranchised.

Mr. ERNST: And if they do not receive a bounty.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): They may. They would not receive payments under the Indian Act.

Mr. ERNST: That is what I mean.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): They are Canadian citizens with all the privileges of citizenship. But no Indian is entitled to the franchise until he is enfranchised. An Indian is debarred from the privileges of the franchise until he becomes an enfranchised Indian under the act.

Mr. ARTHURS: There is no question about the ordinary Indian residing in Canada being a Canadian, and I say that a band of Indians who have no treaty with the government, and never had, should be placed in the same position at least as the Eskimo. There can be no reason why the Eskimo should be preferred while the Indian, who is, to say the least, just as intelligent, should be debarred from the franchise.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): The Indian Act provides as to the steps that are to be taken to enfranchise an Indian, and he is not enfranchised until those steps are taken. The question that arises about the Eskimo is a different one altogether. An Eskimo would have to be construed to be an Indian and subjected to all the restrictions of the Indian Act, which he is not.

Mr. ARTHURS: If this act passes, the Eskimo and the non-treaty Indian are in exactly the same position. There is absolutely no difference between them.

[Mr. Arthurs.]

Mr. MARCIL: I am glad to hear this discussion about the Eskimos. Now that the eyes of Canada are turning towards the north it is interesting to note that public interest is being taken in these people. Many hon. members of this house are no doubt aware that two or three years ago Pere Duchaussois, of the Oblate order, published a book, entitled "Aux Glaces Polaires," which has had a very extensive circulation all through Europe, and has been crowned by the French Academy. The book gives a most complete account of that northern country from the historical perspective, and especially of the Eskimo proper. The Oblate fathers, under Mgr. Turquetil, have been carrying on missionary work there for many years, and so also have the Anglicans. I am glad to know that the government is now going to take a larger interest in these farthest removed inhabitants of the north. The hardships with which they have to contend are almost inconceivable and, as described by Pere Duchaussois in his book, are indeed a revelation. Modern science to-day has brought the radio to the Eskimos, and through the good offices of the Royal North West Mounted Police day by day they are being brought into closer touch with civilization. One reason perhaps more than any other why they should receive sympathy and assistance of Canada is that they have to endure great hardships. I think we should extend to them the inestimable privilege of being recognized as British subjects, entitled to all the privileges that come to those who enjoy British citizenship.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: I have been looking into this bill very carefully. The minister draws a sharp distinction between the Eskimo and the Indian. Will he be good enough to tell us how he decides whether a person is an Eskimo or an Indian? What are the grounds of distinction?

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I do not think one would have very much difficulty in deciding which was an Indian and which was an Eskimo by the appearance. That is one test. Another is language; to some extent, also, their habits. After all, there is not so very much difference between an Englishman and a Scotchman.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, yes.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: Everybody will not agree with the minister there. What I really mean is this: There must be some description of an Indian and some description of an Eskimo. The minister says that a person could tell the difference between them by their appearance, but the minister himself is not going to decide which of these thousands of