

On section 5,

Mr. MARTIN. I would like to ask the Solicitor General (Mr. Fitzpatrick), who has charge of this Bill, what provision he has made, if any, for Prince Edward Island, which, as I pointed out on a former occasion, has no voters' list at present in existence.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL (Mr. Fitzpatrick). It is not essential that there should be a voters' list. I would like my hon. friend to point out in what respect he thinks we have overlooked the case of Prince Edward Island. The first paragraph of this section provides for the adoption of the provincial qualifications. In the province of Quebec and in the province of Ontario the essential requisite to enable any one to vote is his registration on the voters' list. In the province of Prince Edward Island there is no such requisite. I draw my hon. friend's attention to section 17, where he will find it provided that upon an elector entering the room where the poll is held, and declaring his name, if he is found entitled to vote, he shall receive from the deputy returning officer a ballot paper. I may say to my hon. friend that when we reach that section I intend to introduce an amendment to make it absolutely clear, so as to provide that in Prince Edward Island the same method of voting shall be pursued as in the local elections.

Mr. HEYD. I must claim the indulgence of the House for a few minutes, while I allude to the effect which this section has in the constituency which I have the honour to represent. It says :

The qualifications necessary to entitle any person to vote thereat shall be those established by the laws of that province as necessary to entitle such person to vote in the same part of the province at a provincial election.

Unfortunately for some 647 of my constituents, their names do not appear on the provincial lists. The provincial laws of Ontario do not recognize Indians, in the ordinary sense of the term, to be qualified to exercise the provincial franchise; but some twelve years ago provision was made in the Dominion Franchise Act, for the first time in the history of this country, to admit Indians of that kind to the exercise of the franchise, and they have exercised that right on four different occasions. Whether that legislation was wise or unwise is a question I am not going to discuss to-day. At the time the Bill giving them the franchise was introduced, it created a great deal of excitement. The party who introduced were charged with having introduced it for political purposes. But I do not propose to discuss that question or introduce anything of a controversial character. The clause of this Bill which I have read has given rise to a good deal of comment in my constituency, as our In-

Mr. FITZPATRICK.

dian friends, after having enjoyed the franchise for the last twelve years, and having exercised it on four different occasions, have learned to regard it with considerable affection. I am quite willing to admit that at the time the franchise was conferred upon them, they objected to it. It was a new thing, something that had never been indulged in before. On the reserve in South Brant the affairs of the tribe were conducted on the old tribal system, under which the chiefs were elected by the females of the family; and to have suddenly obtained the right to take part in the management of the affairs of this Dominion was rather a big undertaking for them. But now, after having exercised that right in four different elections, they appreciate it, or at least a large portion of them do; and I have received petitions from that section represented by 647 votes, or nearly 4,000 people, who are affected by this proposed change; and I will read these petitions in order that the House may understand the position these people occupy :

Ohsweken Council House,
21st February, 1898.

C. B. Heyd, Esq., M.P.

My dear Mr. Heyd,—I herewith inclose you a copy of a minute passed by the Six Nations Council on the 17th inst., respecting the Franchise Act, which you referred to in your letter to me for the consideration of the council. The majority of the chiefs desired me to ask you kindly to do all you can to retain the privilege of the franchise which they enjoyed heretofore, and to pay no attention to protests which may be forwarded to you by a few of the chiefs who are opposed to the measure.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,
JOSIAH HILL,
Secy., S.N.C.

I have also received a petition signed by a large number of the chief warriors of the tribe, to the number of some 276, as follows :—

Honourable Sir,—We, the undersigned warriors of the Six Nations band of Indians, residing on the Grand River reservation, in support of the wise legislation and decision of the Six Nations Council to retain the franchise, we the undersigned electors beg to subscribe our names in support of that decision upon the following grounds :—

In the interests and in behalf of civilization and education, we desire to advance as an intelligent community, and not go back or retrograde to a state of disregard of all Christian principles, and an irresponsible state of government of our national affairs.

We realize that the conferring of the franchise has been a great educating factor amongst our people, and that in having a voice in the government of the Dominion, in which our treaty rights exist and have been respected, that we have a power in our representative in Parliament which we did not have before the franchise was conferred, in the management of our affairs by the Government of Canada, in whose safe-keeping our treaty rights have been intrusted by