

distinction all the way through. I have already stated what the views were on the question itself, and if I am to confine myself to this section, I have nothing further to add; but, on the other hand, if we are to discuss the general question of enfranchisement that opens up, a wider field.

Mr. ROBB: On what grounds did the Indians object to enfranchisement?

Mr. BOYS: They want to please themselves. What moved the committee to adopt this amendment was the experience of the department. A matter perhaps worth referring to is that, Under the Indian Act, after fifty-three years of operation, only 65 Indians were enfranchised. Under the amendment made by chapter 26 of the Statutes of 1918, where there was a wider opportunity for enfranchisement, no less than 258 Indians took advantage of those provisions in less than two years, and it is felt that many more will do so under the provisions of the amended Act. Personally I see no reason why Indians who leave the reserve and work in the shops of Montreal, Brantford or other cities should have the protection to which an Indian is entitled under the Act, because these Indians are in receipt of large sums of money; many of them are professional men, doctors and lawyers, and should not be treated as wards. There is no thought on the part of the department, so far as we can gather from its past practice or from what the Deputy Superintendent stated before the committee, to bring about the enfranchisement of Indians in any wholesale way. If hon. members will read the provisions of the Bill and see the protection that surrounds the Indian in that regard, and if they will take the trouble also to read the proceedings before the committee and find out what the practice of the department has been, they will come to the conclusion that there is no thought on the part of the department of enfranchising any Indian who is not fit to be enfranchised. It is no wonder that the Indians did not take advantage of enfranchisement under the old method. Section 108 of the Indian Act, 1914, provides that whenever any male Indian or unmarried Indian woman of the full age of twenty-one years makes application to the Superintendent General for enfranchisement, the Superintendent General shall instruct the agent of the band of which the applicant is a member to call upon the latter to furnish a certificate. That is the first thing that has to be done; and that certificate

[Mr. Boys.]

has to be furnished under oath taken before a judge, justice of the peace, stipendiary magistrate, etc. It has to be shown that for at least five years previously the Indian has been of good moral character, temperate in his habits, intelligent, and so on. Then under section 109, upon receipt of that certificate thirty days have to lapse, during which time affidavits may be handed in with regard to the fitness or the character of the Indian in question. In the event of there being no such affidavits the Superintendent General under section 110, after examining the evidence may, if he decides in favour of the applicant, grant him a location ticket for land occupied by him. Then, under section 112 three years are to elapse before the Indian is entitled to enfranchisement. Now, these proceedings seem to be slow and cumbersome. The amendments proposed by the committee provide that after the report is made under subsection 2 by the board referred to, the next step is as follows:

On the report of the Superintendent General that any Indian, male or female, over the age of twenty-one years is fit for enfranchisement, the Governor in Council may by order direct that such Indian shall be and become enfranchised at the expiration of two years from the date of such order, or on the date of such order if requested by such Indian, and from the date of such enfranchisement the provisions of the Indian Act and of any other Act or law making any distinction between the legal rights, privileges, disabilities and liabilities of Indians and those of His Majesty's other subjects, shall cease to apply to such Indian or to his or her minor unmarried children, or, in the case of a married male Indian, to the wife of such Indian, and every such Indian and child and wife shall thereafter have possess and enjoy all the legal powers, rights and privileges of His Majesty's other subjects, and shall no longer be deemed to be Indians within the meaning of any laws relating to Indians.

Briefly summarized, this provision simply means that in the case of an Indian who is fit for enfranchisement the board investigates the case and, the report being favourable, the Superintendent General issues the order and at the end of two years the Indian becomes enfranchised. But if he himself wishes, he may become enfranchised at any time before the expiration of the two years. If, of course, this provision was going to lead to the wholesale enfranchisement of Indians against their wishes, a great deal might be said against it; but there is no such intention. Under another section the desire of the Indian himself in regard to enfranchisement is to be a factor in determining his fitness. So that we start off with the report; that report shows