

at all, even under the law as you propose to make it. The First Minister referred to the letter of Mr. Plummer, and it seemed to me a very extraordinary thing that an hon. gentleman who is at the head of the Government, who was for many years Minister of Justice, and who claims, and has asserted again and again, that he is a great constitutional lawyer, should quote the opinion of a man who is not a lawyer at all on the subject of the Indian's title to his property. That is what the hon. gentleman did. He read a letter from Mr. Plummer, assuring the House that the Indians who reside upon certain lands own those lands, that those lands are as much the property of the Indians as the land of a white man is his property. That is not the theory of our law, or the principle upon which we have proceeded. On the contrary, if the Indians abandon their claim to any property it is the Crown that makes the title to any party who purchases. There is no title, or recognition of valid title, so far as the Indians are concerned. But this is a matter of no special consequence in this case. If the Indian has a title to his property let it be acknowledged, the same as in the case of a white man. If an Indian is competent to vote he is competent to take care of his own affairs. Give him his property, mark it out for him, acknowledge his right to his property, and let him do with it as he pleases. If he is competent to take care of it he will exercise the franchise, the same as any other member of the community. But you do not deal with him in that way. You say: You shall not be responsible for your debts, you shall not be liable for any contract you may make, you shall not be subject to taxation, you shall not be subject to military service, or to serve on any jury; upon you shall devolve none of the duties of citizenship; and yet this man, who pays no taxes and bears no share of the public burden, is to be called upon to take his share in the government of the nation; the man who is not competent to direct his own affairs, you say, is to be called upon to take part in directing the affairs of the country. I do not wish, nor do the white population of the country, generally, wish to interfere with the Indian bands, or to disturb their domestic concerns. We allow them to manage their own local affairs in their own way, and so long as we do that, and do not do away with the distinction between the Indian and the rest of the population, we have no right to say that distinction shall disappear in this Parliament, but shall be continued in every other relation in life. The hon. gentleman read a letter from an Indian chief, who professed himself a very devoted supporter of the hon. gentleman, and who declared that the Indians of the Mississagua band had a valid claim to the sum of money the Government had awarded them. The accuracy of this declaration is extremely questionable. I think, in the first place, that the hon. gentleman acted in a highly improper manner in regard to the claim of what is called the Mississagua band. What are the facts? They claimed payment for property said to have been surrendered to the Crown more than sixty years ago, and that the Crown had never accounted for that property. This question was before a Government of which the hon. gentleman was a member, as early as 1858. Why did he not deal with it then? Why was it not disposed of at that time? Why was not the Indian claim acknowledged at that time? But there was nothing of that sort done, and now, eighteen or twenty years after the Union, he has recognized the claim of that band to the amount of upwards of \$68,000. By what authority did he do that? I say he had no authority for recognising any such claim. If that claim was a valid claim it was a claim against the old Provinces of Ontario and Quebec; it was the business of those two Provinces to acknowledge it, before the hon. gentleman did anything in the matter. He ought to have submitted it to the Governments of those two Provinces, and ought to have had their sanction, before he communicated to the Indians that they would be paid this \$68,000. He has

agreed to pay the Indians that sum. Does he suppose the Governments of Ontario and Quebec will recognise his right to make a charge against those two Provinces for a claim of this sort? I cannot suppose for a moment that he will do so, and I hold in my hand a speech made by the Treasurer of Ontario, last winter, in which he refers to this subject, and in which he says:

"In fact, for upwards of sixty years this claim has remained in abeyance, and now we are presented with a claim of \$14,833 in principle and \$51,834 in interest, payable to these Indians. Well, I think it is rather extraordinary that we have not heard of this claim before, and then I may say that it was only presented to us a few days before the meeting at Ottawa in October last. It seems to be a new discovery, and it was recognised by the Government at Ottawa without any communication with the Governments of the Provinces."

What are we to believe with regard to this? The hon. gentleman says it is a good claim. So far as I can gather, the Governments of the two Provinces say it is not. Why did the hon. gentleman recognise it at this moment? In my opinion, the introduction of this Franchise Bill shows why he proposed to confer upon the Indians the elective franchise, and before this elective franchise is conferred upon them it is very important to secure their good will, by recognising a claim, upwards of sixty years old, for the sum of nearly \$70,000. The hon. gentleman read in that letter that this was a meritorious claim. I am not going into that question. It may or it may not be a meritorious claim, but it is a very old one, and there has been great negligence on the part of the old Government of Canada, which existed before the Union, if this money belonging to the Indians remained in their hands for so long a period unaccounted for. But as to the effect of the recognition of this claim there can be no doubt whatever. The letter the hon. gentlemen read from the Indian chief, and the letter I read to the House a few days ago from another Indian chief, show how the Indians regard the action of the hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman would have us believe that these Indians are a highly intelligent, a well-informed class of the population, that they are men of public enterprise and public spirit, and that they are, therefore, qualified to exercise the elective franchise, that it will tend to elevate them, and to make them a more self-reliant and more useful class of the population than they have been hitherto. This is a very extraordinary position for the hon. gentleman to take. He has submitted to us a Bill which disfranchises upwards of 130,000 of the white population of this country, of the men who now possess the elective franchise, and at the same time that he is declaring by his Bill that a large portion of the white population, who now possess the franchise, are not competent to exercise it, he proposes to confer the elective franchise upon an Indian population, that have not shown themselves capable of managing the most ordinary concerns of life. The hon. gentleman has dealt with the Indian population in a very extraordinary way. He at first proposed to embrace the entire Indian population, from Vancouver Island to Halifax, but he found that he could not confer the franchise upon them in the face of public opinion. There was great danger of losing a larger number of white supporters than he would get from the ranks of the red men, and therefore he made his Bill somewhat less extensive; he confined the franchise to those Indians residing within the older Provinces of the Dominion. Sir, are these Indians self-reliant men? Do they manage their own affairs? Do they exhibit any of those habits of life which show they are likely to become intelligent and industrious citizens? Not at all. A great majority of them receive, every spring, seed grain and garden seeds, in order that they may produce, in part, the means of subsistence. If these Indian refuse to vote for the amendment they may get less. They are dependent upon the Government, who may distribute as little or as much as they please. If they fail to give to the Government the support that is expected, the Superin