

Hon. Mr. BELLEROSE—I find a great difference between the circumstances of England and of Canada. In England, there is an aristocracy, who are quite wealthy; then there is a great middle class, who are the tradesmen—the debtors; then there are the working men, but these men have no property generally. In Canada, there is only one class, the middle class—the proprietors, the owners of the soil,—and to make them subject to this law is quite unjust, because they have in their hands sufficient to cover any debt they may contract.

The motion to adjourn the debate was agreed to.

THIRD READING.

Bill (F) “An Act to amend the Act intitled, ‘An Act to amend the Copyright Act.’”—(Mr. Angers.)

INDIAN ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

The House resolved itself into a committee of the whole on Bill (G) “An Act further to amend the Indian Act.”

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—I think there is a little ambiguity in the wording of the first clause, which might lead to some misapprehension as to its meaning; and I would therefore move that the word “but” in the third line be struck out, and that the words “provided that” be substituted therefor. The first portion of the clause prevents the leasing or alienating or selling of any portion of the reserve until it has been released or surrendered. Then it says “but the superintendent general may lease.” It might be inferred that the latter clause was contradictory to the first. The Minister of Justice suggested that these words “provided that” would convey the meaning better.

Hon. Mr. POWER—That alters the wording of the clause, but it does not alter the meaning. My objection to this provision is this: These Indians are treated as the wards of the country. They are treated as children, and properly so. The Indian Act makes special provision to hinder the reserves, which are set aside for the Indians, from being appropriated to other uses than those of the bands of Indians resid-

ing on them. The old Indian Act forbade any reserve, or a portion of a reserve, being sold or alienated until it was surrendered to the Crown, except in the case of Indians being sick or otherwise unfit to cultivate their land, in which case the superintendent general had power to lease the lands to which those persons were entitled. That limits the power of the superintendent general. The old Act contains provision preventing any reserve from being released except with certain solemnities. What does this clause propose to do? It proposes that the superintendent general may lease for any Indian the land to which he is entitled without any release or surrender. The superintendent general takes his information from the officer who is specially charged with the management of Indian affairs. That officer may or may not be a reliable man. It is presumed that he would be. But the acting head of the Indian Department at Ottawa takes his information from the Indian officer near the reserve. We have no guarantee that those men are any better than their neighbours. I presume that they are of good character generally, but we have instances in which they have been proved to be subject to temptation to do wrong, and we put them under greater temptation than we should when we allow an Indian officer in some remote part of Manitoba or British Columbia, or some other place distant from Ottawa, to recommend that a certain portion of the reserve be leased; and that portion may be leased to white friends of the agent. There is no provision forbidding the leasing of a portion of the reserve to some person other than a member of the band, and it must strike the House that it would be highly objectionable that white speculators should be allowed to come in and lease land, possibly in the middle of an Indian reserve. I have not, unfortunately, made myself familiar with the whole of the Indian Act, and that is one reason why I should have preferred to have this matter adjourned until another day, but so far as I can see, there is nothing to prevent an Indian officer recommending that a portion of an Indian reserve be leased to some white friend. These Indians are, as I have said, regarded as infants in the eye of the law, and should be protected, and there should not be any opportunity given for speculators to go on those reserves and get possession of their