

Mr. SPROULE. I rise to a point of order. The hon. gentleman has been reading clauses of the Indian Act, and I ask whether that is pertinent to the question or not.

Mr. CHAIRMAN. I think it is relevant to the question.

Mr. FLEMING. I was proceeding to refer to another disability of the Indians when the hon. gentleman interrupted me with a point of Order which must have amazed every hon. member in this House. Sir, you can see the necessity of this long discussion. Hon. gentleman do not yet understand what subject is before the House. How is it to be expected that we can enlighten the ordinary people of the country, that they will understand the effect of this Bill, when an hon. member sitting in this House and listening to the discussion, has not got the slightest comprehension of the matter before the Chair. We must go on. There is a public necessity for us to go on. The interest of the people demand that we should go on for we cannot permit hon. gentlemen sitting in this House to remain in blissful ignorance of the matter before the Chair.

Mr. SPROULE. Give us information.

Mr. FLEMING. Why, Sir, I am burning with the desire to give him information; I am overflowing with the milk of human kindness in the way of information. If the hon. gentleman will point out to me any way in which I can make him understand that we are discussing the right of the Indian to vote, I am willing to devote myself for a month or two during the summer in endeavoring to convey information to him. I trust I shall not require so long a time with other hon. gentlemen as with the hon. member for Grey; I trust that his case is unique.

Mr. SPROULE. Your success has not been very great yet.

Mr. FLEMING. If it has not, it has not been from the weakness of our efforts or the lack of necessity for them, but is rather owing to the material we are working upon. Perhaps I may now quote section 74:

"The Superintendent General may, whenever sick or disabled or aged or destitute Indians are not provided for by the band of which they are members, furnish sufficient aid from the funds of the band for the relief of such sick, disabled, aged or destitute Indians."

From this it appears that the whole fund is at the disposal of the Superintendent General, who is not responsible for its disposition to the Indians owning the fund, but only to Parliament; he can distribute to whom he likes—to the sick, the destitute, the lame, the halt, and the blind, as he thinks proper. And these are the persons to whom the hon. gentleman proposes to give the franchise! The Indian is not subject to the same laws as the white people of this Dominion; and yet the Government are endeavoring to push through a Bill, the sole purpose of which is to give them control over a large number of the votes of those people who are not free, in order that they may swamp the voice of the free people of this country, and in order that the honest verdict of the people may not be recorded against them. That is the kind of a measure that the Government are trying to force through by physical power, not by force of intellect. Sir, they have failed; they must fail; in a free country like this, it is impossible that an attempt of this kind can succeed. We on this side of the House are not physically strong, and we are less in number than they are; but what physical strength and intellectual power remains to a free man on this side of the House he would be unworthy to possess if he did not exercise to the full extent to prevent the Administration from introducing into the electorate of this country an element so dangerous to the peace and welfare of the whole people of this Dominion. Sir, what are the rights that as free men we boast of? What are the rights that have been handed down to us by illustrious ancestors? They are the rights

of free men, the right of owning our own property, and controlling our own affairs; and are those rights to be interfered with by a class who have no such rights? Is the voice of the free and independent electors of the noble county of Peel, which I have the honor to represent, to become ineffective because some gentleman is to be elected by the votes of those who are not free? Sir, speaking for myself individually, feeling the responsibility of the position I occupy, feeling that the honor of a free people has been entrusted to me to vindicate in this House, feeling that my own sense of honor, my own sense of patriotism, my own sense of self-respect, demand that I should resist the oppressive measure that is now being forced through Parliament, I declare before this House and before the country, feeling the full responsibility of what I am saying, that I will continue, with all the powers with which God has endowed me, either intellectual or physical, to resist this encroachment upon the rights of the free people of this country—this endeavor to stifle their voice in the councils of this country by the voice of those who are not free, but are subject to the control of the Government of the day.

Mr. SOMERVILLE (Brant). The important question that has been discussed by this House for 50 hours now is such that I think every gentleman who has the honor to occupy a seat here should express his opinion upon it. It is a question which, as has been well said by the previous speaker, affects the freedom of the entire people of this Dominion. The measure before us is one which strikes at the root of all the liberties we as British subjects possess—liberties which have been handed down to us by those who in other fields of action had to spend their blood to secure them. The question has been fully and ably discussed by the hon. gentlemen who occupy seats on this side of the House, and I will be as brief as possible in anything that I may have to present on this occasion. The first consideration that strikes me in connection with this measure is the course the Government have pursued in introducing it. We have the hon. the First Minister coming down and introducing it at a late period of the Session, and we have his declaration that it would be taken up and put through before any other measure should be considered. We have the declaration of hon. gentlemen opposite that they came here to attempt to stifle discussion—to cry down the voices of the independent representatives of the people who occupy seats on this side of the House. We know what their conduct was which commenced on Monday and terminated on Tuesday night. We know that they indulged in the most unseemly noises; we know that they occupied themselves, not in endeavoring to comprehend the question before the House, but in indulging in noises that would disgrace the most disgraceful house in the city of Ottawa. They refused to hear the opinions of men sent here to express the opinion of the people, on this important question. But what a change has come over the scene! They found that their ribaldry, their songs of merriment and their disorderly conduct would not do. They found that this noble band that sits on this side of the House, though small in number, were determined that they would not be put down in this free House, elected by the free will of the people of this Dominion. They held a caucus, and the fiat went out from the leader of the Government that silence was henceforth to be the order of the day, and at the next session of the House we saw that their course was changed. They came here with their pillows, and went to sleep within the sound of the voices of the speakers who were discussing this question; they provided themselves with beds and couches; and a gentleman who ought to know better, a man who has occupied a seat, not only in this House, but in the Local House of Ontario, was actually engaged in dancing the Highland fling, while this important measure was being