

upon the objective of Indian policy. As a consequence of pressure brought to bear, a subsequent Minister—I think it was in 1922 or 1923—repealed the measure to which I have referred. This is a re-enactment of that measure in somewhat modified form, and contains safeguards to which I do not take the least objection.

Honourable members will see that provision is made in this Bill whereby the initiative may be taken by the Superintendent General. Under the old Act a board consisting of three members, two appointed by the Minister and one appointed by the Indian band, dealt with the subject of enfranchisement. Under the present Bill one of the members of the board must be a judge, and the Indians have something to say in the selection that is to be made.

As I have stated, the real object of the Bill is to secure the enfranchisement of men who should no longer be wards and children of the State, but are perfectly competent to walk their own path in life. I have not the slightest doubt of the wisdom of moving along this line. In fact, if there is any object at all to our Indian policy, it is gradually to bring the Indian up to the status of citizenship. Are we going to admit that our goal is to keep these people for ever as wards, to be sustained, supported, led and fed by the Government of our country? If that is our object, then we should never have enabled the guardian of the Indians of Canada to open the door of citizenship to them, but should have allowed them to continue to huddle together where they are, and should have prevented even the most aspiring among them from reaching the goal of citizenship, which, it seems to me, is the only sane and useful goal of Indian policy in this country.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I should like to ask my right honourable friend, who seems to have considerable knowledge of this subject, exactly what is to be the effect of the modification now suggested to us. I can quite understand that under the old Act an Indian who desired to strike out for himself and commingle with the whites as a full-fledged citizen would leave the reserve and ask for citizenship. His case was clear. When he wanted to fly with his own wings, he set the machinery in motion. But will my right honourable friend explain to us what will take place now? The agent on the reserve, who knows the Indians, may report that ten, twenty or fifty members of the band can shift for themselves. If he recommends to the Superintendent that they should be ousted from the reserve and sent into the outside

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN.

world, after being granted their share of the assets held for them in the department, will the Superintendent decide upon that report whether these men should become Canadian citizens and be enfranchised? Perhaps the right honourable gentleman will tell us just what will happen to the property of an Indian who is enfranchised under this section. What will be done with the individual's share of interest which has accrued on capital in the hands of the department? And what will govern the selection of those who are to be enfranchised? Will there be a careful study of the development of the various bands, and will those that are approved be enfranchised as a whole? Or will individual selections be made? I confess that I have not compared these amendments with the Act, and I am concerned as to what may happen when an Indian is enfranchised, not on his own initiative, but in consequence of a departmental report.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: In deciding whether to take steps for the enfranchisement of any Indians, the Minister will no doubt be guided by the report of his agent in the reserve in which the particular Indians live. A number of reports may be made in some instances. Section 7 shows the procedure to be followed when it is decided that steps should be taken towards enfranchisement. That section reads:

In respect of an Indian or Indians of any band who has not or have not made application for enfranchisement under this section or under section one hundred and fourteen of this Act—

The right of an Indian to apply voluntarily is preserved.

—the Superintendent General may appoint a Board to consist of any judge of any superior court or any judge of any circuit, district or county court, an officer of the Department and a member of the band to be selected by the band to which the Indian or Indians under investigation belongs or belong, or failing the selection of such member for a period of thirty days after the date of notice having been given to the Council, the member shall be appointed by the Superintendent General, to make enquiry and report as to the fitness of any Indian or Indians to be enfranchised, and such report shall have the same force and effect and shall be dealt with in the same manner as if the same had been made upon the application of an Indian or Indians under this section: Provided that no enfranchisement of any Indian or Indians shall be made under this subsection in violation of the terms of any treaty, agreement or undertaking that may have been entered into or made between or by the Crown and the Indians of the band in question.

I call attention to the provision that compulsory enfranchisement of any Indian shall not be effected in violation of any treaty; but I do not apprehend that there is in existence