

tutions were on trial here ; I think they are, but I wonder if the systematic attempt, not to use a disrespectful word to hon. gentlemen opposite, by which they persistently refuse to discuss the features of the Bill, show their idea of representative institutions. I wonder if that was the mode in which representative institutions were established in this House. It seemed to me that if the hon. gentleman's argument was worth anything it lay in the direction that the minority were entirely to give up their views and sentiments in reference to any measure, the majority believed was in the political interests of their party, and tamely having that measure thrust upon them, whether they liked it or not. If I understand representative institutions at all, the power we have here is delegated by the people; we are sent here by the people for the purpose of voicing their sentiments, not for the purpose of sitting down quietly, accepting any measure that may be presented to the House by the majority, without discussing it on its merits. How many gentlemen opposite have attempted to discuss this question on its merits? During the famous three days discussion, when they broke out from their silence and on Saturday night discussed the issues before the House, I venture to say that there is not one of those gentlemen who spoke that evening who would not gladly recall the words he then uttered. I believe representative institutions are on their trial on this occasion, because I believe the first element involved in them is that we should have a full and free opportunity of discussing the questions before the House. So far as my opinions are concerned, I do not regard this measure with any favor. The circumstances under which the hon. First Minister introduced that question to us this afternoon were not calculated to strengthen our respect for the mode in which hon. gentlemen opposite have handled the question. The hon. gentleman now suggests it is time to discuss the measure in a calm, dispassionate manner, and was willing to accept any suggestions that would make the measure perfect, and shadowed forth, as I understood him, some serious changes he proposes to introduce. How different that ground is to the ground he took up at the commencement of the debate. When the measure was first brought down we were told distinctly that it would be a measure to establish a uniform suffrage throughout the Dominion, that we were to have equitable representation through all parts of the Dominion, and that no longer the system of Provinces selecting their representatives under their own systems should obtain. Another distinguished feature of this measure, the woman franchise clause was abandoned by the First Minister, without a word of protest. He made no attempt to defend it, but left it to the tender mercies of his own followers. How did he deal with the next important section, the one more directly affecting Ontario? I refer to the Indian question. Was the same freedom granted to his followers in that matter? No, Sir. It was something remarkable, in connection with that whole discussion, to witness the persistent attempt being made by certain members in discussing that question to cover up the issues involved in the discussion of the particular word "Indian." There is another point in connection with this, to which I would like to call the attention of the committee. At first the leader of the House told us that all Indians were to be enfranchised if they came under the qualification clause. After a while, when this matter was turned over, and I suppose troubles began to spread in the North West, the Government saw it was not desirable that the Indians who are in open rebellion should be entitled to vote, and the Indians in the North-West, Manitoba and British Columbia were excluded from the operation of this Bill. It was somewhat strange that out of the Indians that remained to be enfranchised, as this Bill calls it, over one-half are resident in Ontario, and a large portion are scattered in little bands on reserves in various sections of the other Provinces. In connection with this

feature there crops up the inference that one prime object of this Bill is to reach, in certain connections, certain members of the Opposition in Ontario who otherwise could not be readily defeated. We have been told by the hon. member for Lincoln and the hon. member for Algoma that this was an enfranchisement of the Indians, and that if the amendment of the hon. member for Bothwell had carried it would disfranchise all the Indians. All I have to say is, that in turning to the amendment of the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) I find it reads :

"That after the word (Indian) the following words be added: who has been enfranchised under the Indian Act and has had conferred upon him the same social capacities as other persons who are qualified to vote in this country"

I give my hon. friend from Algoma (Mr. Dawson) credit for having the welfare of the Indian at heart, but it was not the intention of this Act to bestow upon the Indian the qualifications of citizenship in the ordinary sense of the word. He is simply to vote under the occupancy clause, by which it is not necessary that he should have any control over the portion of the reserve on which he is located, excepting that he must live in a bark hut, or a tepee, or any kind of residence which enables him to occupy a piece of ground, which the revising barrister may be satisfied is worth \$150. It is not enfranchising the Indians. It is simply creating a number of voting machines. We do not enfranchise a Chinaman or a negro, or any other man, white or black, mixed or colored, unless he has qualified himself for the duties of citizenship, by taking all the responsibilities attached to it. Other men can be sued for their debts, but you cannot reach the Indian under the ordinary contracts. He is as much a minor as a child, and is absolutely under the control of the Government of the day. When we remember that more than half the Indians in the older Provinces of the Dominion are located in the Province of Ontario, on reserves which are within the bounds of existing constituencies, it is easy to see the reasons for introducing this iniquitous measure. It is a gross wrong to the electorate of those ridings. The Indians have nothing in common with the rest of the people, politically, socially or industrially. In any of those counties there is more than enough of an Indian vote to swamp the free choice of the people of the riding, and thus a great injustice is being done to the people. Hon. gentlemen say they are anxious to elevate the Indian. So are we; but will they tell us how giving him an opportunity once in five years to deposit a ballot which, in half the cases, he will not be able to deposit for himself, without the instructions to voters who cannot read or write, will have that effect? He is still under the control of the Government of the day as much as ever. Yet they pretend to say this is enfranchising the Indian. I say it gives him no rights of citizenship whatever. He takes no responsibilities with it. It does not enable him to go out into social life and take any of the various positions that are open to every citizen. He is still an Indian on his tribal reserve, and except for the opportunity of having his ballot marked for him once in five years, he is no nearer elevation than he was before. Sir, I despair of the Indian ever being elevated if these are the elevating influences that are to surround him. The hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Mitchell) the other night, had the independence to express his opinion with reference to the quality of the Indian vote in his riding. He said one thing, which I think expresses more than anything else the feeling he had in reference to the power involved in that and one or two other clauses of this Bill. He said he wanted the leader of the Government to remain the leader of this House for many years to come, but he must say that if the Liberal party came to control the affairs of this country, and had the power conferred upon them by this Bill, he would dislike to have that applied to his own county if he were a candidate. Sir, could there be a