

within the limits of their tribe. They are people whose minds are inclined to take a political direction. They are excellent material to make citizens out of, and what we ask is, that they should be made citizens; that the right hon. gentleman's Indian Act should be so modified that it will be possible for every Indian, who possesses the capability, to become a citizen, and to take upon himself the duties and responsibilities which every man in Canada has to undertake when he reaches the age of maturity. I claim that it is a disgrace to our legislation that our Indians, with their intellectual capacity, with the education some of them have acquired, and the property some of them possess, should be treated with more suspicion and discredit than the negroes. I think great injustice has been done to our Indians in this respect. The right hon. gentleman has alluded to them as formerly the owners of this great country. Perhaps, it is not strictly correct to say they were the owners, but at all events they were the undisturbed occupiers of this country. They possessed perfect freedom and liberty of action; their chiefs were kings in a small way, their braves were free men, and now what is their condition? They have been kept by successive Governments in a condition very similar to that of the serfs in Russia, unable to leave their reserves without the consent of the agent, just as the serf in Russia was not allowed to leave without his master's consent; incapable of administering their own property, and even unable to make wills and dispose of their personal property without the consent of that paternal Government which has kept them in servitude for successive generations. I have no doubt that this servitude was originally established in the interest of the Indian himself, and might have been necessary for a time; but I agree with many who have spoken, that that time has passed with respect to many of our Indians—I do not say with respect to any whole tribe, but with respect to many individuals in the more advanced tribes—that the time has come when they should be allowed and even compelled to take the responsibility of citizenship. My hon. friend to my left says, not compelled. I do not know whether that would be consistent with the treaties, but they should be encouraged to take upon themselves the duties of full citizenship. To argue from all this, however, that the provisions of the present Bill, giving them power to vote when they are not yet citizens, should be adopted, would be perfectly absurd. I can go as far as anybody in urging the claim of the Indian to be a citizen, but I can go quite as far in contending that no one who is not a citizen should have the franchise; that, while he is kept in wardship, while he is in a state analogous to that of a Russian serf, while he is under the control of a paternal Government, he should not have the rights of a full fledged citizen of the country. The right hon. gentleman fought with a great many phantoms, in his speech this afternoon. He expatiated at great length on the wealth and intelligence of the Indian, and argued from that that he ought to have a vote. I go so far as to say that he should be placed in a position where he would have a vote; but the remedy for that is not in this Bill, but lies in making it possible for him to become a citizen. Then you will not need any qualifying clause, any definition in this Act. Give the Indian a vote. Let the Indian by all means become a citizen; then he will have a vote as a matter of course. You never think of inserting a clause in this Bill to say that a negro shall have a vote, simply because a negro is admittedly a citizen, and he gets his vote as a matter of course. You never think of putting in a clause to say that people of any other race among us shall have a vote, simply because, as soon as they become citizens, they get votes as a matter of course. Why should it be different with the Indian? Make it easy for him to become a citizen, then he will have a vote without any special provisions being necessary to give it to him. Our

objection to admitting the Indians to vote is not based merely upon the present condition of the Indians. We believe some of them are not fit, as the right hon. gentleman did not think they were fit a few years ago, to exercise even municipal powers; but with regard to others who are individually fit, our objections rest solely upon their civil status. Therefore, it is beside the question for the right hon. gentleman to lay so much stress upon the personal capacity of these Indians. He went on to say that the Indian should "exercise the electoral franchise on an equal footing with the white man." Those were his own words. I am quite prepared to go with him to that extent. In fact, I do not think the position of this side of the House could be better expressed than in those words. We think the Indian should exercise the franchise on equal terms with the white man. Make the Indian just such a citizen as the white man, and then let him exercise the franchise on equal terms. That is exactly what we have been contending for. I do not think it could have been better or more fairly put than the right hon. gentleman has put it; but it is as far as the poles away from what this Bill provides. This Bill does not provide that an Indian shall exercise the franchise on an equal footing with white men; but it provides that he shall exercise the franchise on unequal terms; that his right to have the franchise shall be at the mercy of the Superintendent, who is the right hon. gentleman himself, at present, and at the mercy of the Indian agent, at the mercy of a host of underlings, as well as of the great grand master himself. Now, Sir, the real issue is in connection with that point. Are they citizens or are they not? Are they on an equal footing with white men? If so, they will have the franchise as a matter of course; if not, it is an outrage to give them the franchise. The right hon. gentleman says they are independent—as independent as the workingmen. Now, Sir, I do not think that the workingmen will relish that statement, or that his friends, who have made a special bid for the support of the workingmen, will relish the statement, that they and the tribal Indians on the reserves are on the same level with respect to independence. I do not think the thousands of workingmen who voted for the supporters of the right hon. gentlemen will like to be told that they are no more independent than the tribal Indian on his reserve. Just remember the absence of civil rights in the Indian, his inability to manage his own property, his inability to act in any capacity in which white men act, and then say if it is not an insult to the workingmen of Canada to tell them that the Indian is as independent as they are. The right hon. gentlemen said that in some of the Provinces the Indian does exercise the rights of citizenship. He did not tell us what those Provinces were. Those of us who come from Ontario do not know what Province he means. In fact, I am informed by gentlemen nearly as well posted in regard to the Indians as the Superintendent General himself, that there is no Province where they exercise the rights of citizens. I should be obliged if any member of any Province could tell us of any instance where the Indian, who has not been legally enfranchised under the present Indian Act, or some previous Act enfranchising Indians, can exercise the functions of a citizen. I do not believe there is any such case. And yet, Sir, it is not only those who are so enfranchised, who have been made citizens by an Act of this Parliament, or by some Act of Old Canada, or some of the provincial Acts, but also those who are holding tribal relations, that the hon. gentleman proposes to endow with the voting power. I rose on this occasion, not to prolong the debate, but to call attention to one or two of those new points that had been brought up by the right hon. gentleman himself, and which challenged discussion. I think I have satisfactorily referred to them, and I shall take my seat, merely protesting against the attempt that has been made to make it appear that we wish to exclude the Indian from the fran-