

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LEGISLATIVE RECORD

OF THE

Ninety-Sixth Legislature

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE

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Which resolve being an emergency measure and having received the affirmative vote of 29 members of the Senate, and none opposed, was finally passed.

Constitutional Amendment

"Resolve Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution Permitting Indians to Vote." (H. P. 423) (L. D. 470)

Mr. BOUCHER of Androscoggin: Mr. President and members of the Senate, first, I want to go on record as favoring the voting privilege however, that the Indians themselves do not care to vote. I have here in my drawer, petitions with 123 names of Indians on Indian Island, who are against this document. They asked me to make this statement in the Senate and I am going to make it, although I do favor the bill.

The Indians believe that if we grant them the right to vote that we probably will next ask for a poll tax from them and then a property tax and so on. I am telling you this only because I think it is my duty to do as they have asked me.

Mr. HASKELL of Penobscot: Mr. President, at times the Senator from Androscoggin, Senator Boucher, has permitted me to share with him the responsibilities of the Indians of Indian Island, and sharing that with him, I would speak to that petition.

It does represent the wishes of not all of the Indians there and the basis of their thinking is the fear that the right to vote will in some way make more difficult their opportunities of placing their financial responsibilities upon the State of Maine. I think there might be two observations made in that respect. First, that the aid granted to the Indians in the two tribes is a matter of appropriations passed by both branches of the legislature. The second and more important consideration is the same argument that compelled both branches of the legislature to take \$140,000 out of the unappropriated surplus of the general fund in 1949 and build a bridge across there, realizing that with the bridge, they would be better able to themselves be as-

simulated into what they call the "white man's civilization."

I believe that granting them the right to vote is a step just as important as building bridges to them. I think despite the fears of the minority groups, removing that stigma that adds them to the pauper restriction with reference to voting, is a step in the right direction with reference to voting, is a step in the right direction and if ever the Indian problem in the State of Maine is going to be solved, it will be solved by principals that were supported when we gave them a bridge and are now giving them the right to vote. It would be my hope that when this Constitutional Amendment is voted upon it will have the support of every member in this Senate Chamber this morning.

Mr. DUNHAM of Hancock: Mr. President, it was my privilege on several occasions to visit these reservations and I recall with pride listening to several of the more intelligent members of this reservation, point with a great deal of satisfaction to the fact they were able to vote in the last election, and it did my heart good to see these people stand up and say how proud they were to exercise that right, and I never heard more intelligent remarks than those people made. Therefore I am very happy to go along with this.

Mr. BOUCHER: Mr. President, I want to make my position very clear. I personally do want the Indians to vote. I simply felt that where they had requested that I tell the Senate that they do not want the right to vote, that I should tell you about it. I personally am in favor of going along with this.

Mr. PARKER of Piscataquis: Mr. President, I hesitate to try to add anything to what has already been said on the question of the Indians voting, but having served my first term on the Welfare Committee, probably I might have been more deeply impressed with the arguments for and against the Indians having an opportunity to vote. I just want to rise and tell the members of the Senate of one young man who was before the hearing on Indian Island, or perhaps it was

at Pleasant Point. Anyway, one young man who told us he had served in the armed forces of the United States, I believe with distinction, and when he went to the polls last fall and wanted to vote, he was denied that privilege because in the State of Maine, he had not that right.

I certainly feel that when a young man who has served in his country's behalf, regardless of this color or his background, I believe he should have an opportunity to express his preference at the polls.

Mr. BOUCHER: Mr. President, when the vote is taken, I request that it be taken by the Yeas and Nays.

Mr. BROWN of Washington: Mr. President, I have not had much to say during this session but I would like to express my views on this subject.

In 1949, the Indians came in here from Old Town and asked for the right to vote and they found that if they were given the right to vote, they would have to pay a tax.

Now this is the situation in my county, and I think it applies to Old Town. They would like to have these fellows vote, but they want them to vote on their reservation. The Indians are getting roughly \$108,000 for one tribe, and about \$65,000 for the other. That is a lot of money. They cost a lot of money and the only reason they don't want to vote is because they are afraid that they will be deprived of some of those benefits.

The only solution in my mind to the Indian problem is to assimilate them into the regular population of the state. As soon as you get them away from those reservations, they become good citizens and those children don't ask for anything from us. They become good, self-respecting citizens of the state and live just like the rest of us.

In Old Town as you probably know, there are a lot of manufacturing plants there and they are right near the reservations and a great many of the young people work in those plants, and seem to be working out very well.

I think this Indian situation has got to be straightened out and it

should start along the lines of getting them off the reservations and assimilated into the regular population of the state. This is the first time I have said anything about the Indian problem in three sessions and I could go on for hours but I won't. I think the Indians should be allowed to vote. I believe it would be a step toward helping the Indians and the Indian problem in the State of Maine.

Mr. HASKELL: Mr. President, I move the pending question.

The PRESIDENT: The question before the Senate is on the enactment of the resolve, and the Senator from Androscoggin, Senator Boucher, has requested that the vote be taken by Yeas and Nays. To order the Yeas and Nays requires the affirmative vote of more than one-fifth of the members present. Is the Senate ready for the question.

A division of the Senate was had. Obviously more than one-fifth having risen, the Yeas and Nays were ordered.

The Secretary called the roll.

Thirty-two Senators having voted yea and no Senators having voted nay, the Resolve was passed to be enacted.

Mr. COLLINS of Aroostook: Mr. President, I would move that the Senate reconsider its action taken earlier in today's session whereby it enacted Item 14, L. D. 1511. In support of the motion I would say that the finance office sent me up a copy of those items involving either expenditures or loss of revenue. I did not get the copy of this until after this item came up and I find that it involves a loss of revenue of about \$8,000. For that reason I think it would be wise to reconsider our action after which I would move that the bill be tabled pending enactment. It is no attempt to try to kill the bill, but is just a matter of procedure.

The motion prevailed and the Senate voted to reconsider its action taken earlier in today's session whereby it passed to be enacted, Bill, "An Act Relating to the Law of Manufacture and Sale of Bedding and Upholstered Furniture," (H. P. 1275) (L. D. 1514); and on motion by Mr. Collins of Aroos-