

allow us to let them starve for the sake of economy. The only way to avoid that necessity is by using steady efforts to get them settled on the reserves and to make them farmers. Some of our efforts have resulted in total failure, but the experiment must be persisted in. If there is failure one year it must be avoided next year. The Indians are by slow degrees learning to cultivate the soil. We have already met with sufficient success to justify the Government in asking for these votes. It is a necessity of the whole country to have the Indians civilized and utilized, and if the experiments sometime fail, and if the expense seems large, Parliament must put up with it because there is no other way. I shall only repeat again that the report shows that the Indians have been taking themselves to the cultivation of the soil. They have fully realized that in future years they must look to the soil, not to the produce of the chase, for their support. It is a great thing to have that notion firmly impressed on their minds, that in the future, except in case of an occasional failure of food, they must depend upon the soil for their subsistence. The hon. gentleman says he thinks the appointment of a Commissioner is a mistake—or he insinuated that. I think the hon. gentleman intended at first that the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West (Mr. Laird) should act very much as a Commissioner—at all events he was appointed as agent with an addition to his salary as Governor, for that purpose. Although he was so appointed I understand the hon. gentleman found it more convenient to conduct affairs directly from headquarters here than through Mr. Laird. At all events, Mr. Laird resigned his position. It occurs to me that it is a mere matter of administration, it is a matter of responsible government, and the Minister is responsible to Parliament and the country for the good administration of his department. It seems to me absurd to suppose that every little land agent, every farm instructor and every Indian agent, should report directly here instead of having a commissioner there to whom accounts could be sent, who would supervise the whole system and be responsible to the Minister, the Minister in his turn being responsible to this Parliament. I think that is so obvious that it is hardly worth arguing. As regards the present Commissioner, he was here last Session and he is here this Session, being specially called here for the purpose of consulting with the department. He has roamed over that country with great activity during the short period he has been appointed. He has visited nearly every portion of that vast country, and made himself acquainted with the Indians and their wants. Of course he was fully trained in intercourse with the Indians of the North-West before he was appointed. Being a man of great energy, and of good physique as well, he has gone over that whole country, and has made himself as fully acquainted as any man possibly could during the time. It is, of course, necessary that he should come down here. It was only a journey of three or four days from Winnipeg to Ottawa, and it was necessary that he should come here, and give an account of his experience, along with suggestions as to working out the system, which is yet, I must admit, in an experimental state. I think it will be absolutely necessary that we should have such an officer, and I think results will show that his appointment has been a success. If there is any other point that I have omitted I will be glad to furnish the hon. gentleman with information regarding it.

Mr. MILLS. I will just say a word with regard to the last observation of the hon. gentleman. He knows, from papers in the department from Manitoba superintendency, that all the reports of the various Indian agents came, not to the department, but to the superintendent. If the hon. gentleman has read the papers he knows that the result of that system was not satisfactory, and that a condition of things existed which never could have

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD.

existed if reports had been made directly to the department by the subordinate superintendents as well as by the central office. Look at the results. From 1874 to 1878 the treaties were negotiated. Special expenditures were incurred during these negotiations that have not been incurred since. The hon. gentleman knows that it requires considerable time to negotiate treaties; large number of Indians are assembled together, and must be provided for until the negotiations are concluded. But nothing of that sort has occurred since the hon. gentleman adopted his new arrangements; so that, in comparing the estimates of the early years with those of the latter years, this fact must be kept in view and reductions accordingly made. Notwithstanding that, the expenditure for provisions has enormously increased. There is a strong temptation for men whom you appoint as Indian agents—and they are always men without much means, or they would not accept the salary we give—and who are far removed from the influence of public opinion, to act dishonestly towards the Government or towards the Indians. In my opinion, these men require some sort of supervision, a supervision which they have not received. Some of these men incur larger expenditures than they ought to incur, and I am perfectly satisfied that some of them have not acted faithfully towards the Government who have entrusted them with their positions. I would also call the hon. gentleman's attention to the evidence which the Public Accounts afford, that many Indians have been paid twice over each year, and the number is continually increasing.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Not now; it is decreasing, and we believe it is going still further to decrease.

Mr. MILLS. Under treaties 1, 2, 3 and 5, which apply to Indians who are collected in small bands, the payments in each year have been pretty uniform, and therefore there should be no difficulty in appropriating a precise sum for each; but in the others, 4 and 6, the amounts vary considerably, and have been going on increasing.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. We hope to put a check to that.

Mr. MILLS. With regard to the commissionership, the hon. gentleman has yet to show why it should exist. The hon. gentleman says we had a commissioner; we had Mr. Laird as a temporary superintendent, because we knew very little about the country, and the negotiations with the Indians were not completed. It certainly was not the intention that the condition of things then existing should continue, and it does seem to me that we have now a machinery altogether out of proportion to the work required to be done. It is obvious, from the amount of the appropriation last year, that these Indians were not totally destitute of supplies. The supplies given them would feed them only for a short time, certainly less than a month, and the rest of the time they must have been living on means provided by themselves. When you once commence feeding the Indians, their demands for supplies must go on increasing.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I do not quite understand my hon. friend. The Indians must either be fed or allowed to starve. Of course if they are furnished with food, it is natural for them to hang around where their food is, and every possible check must be applied to stop that. I believe every possible check has been applied. Some of the officials, from good nature, and others from fear of the Indians, being far away from adequate protection, have, perhaps, been too liberal. The hon. gentleman says there are temptations to these men to be dishonest. That is so, and yet the hon. gentleman objects to the Commissioner who is specially appointed to look after these men and to keep them honest as far as possible. I may inform the hon. gentlemen that, in order to prevent the Indians from