

railway communication rather than actual distance, and in that sense Winnipeg is the most central point from which to reach all the Indians under the commissioner's charge. It seems to me that the commissioner's statement, that he could do his work more conveniently from Winnipeg is well-founded, and it is natural that such should be the case. It did not so seem to me when he made the recommendation, and I accepted his suggestion, believing it would increase the efficiency of the work, and I am inclined to think it has. The particular changes to which the hon. gentleman refers, the reorganization of the service in the North-west Territories, did not take effect until too late to have any effect on the crops for the year, so that I do not think my hon. friend's opinion on that point can be considered conclusive. As to the loss of cattle, I refuse to be held responsible for a loss which took place on one of the reserves, which has been referred to before in this House. It took place upon a reserve, owing to the lack of foresight of a gentleman appointed by the late Government and not by mine, and I could not be held responsible in any way except for keeping him in place rather than dismissing him.

Mr. DAVIN. If the hon. gentleman will allow me, I will read what Mr. Forget says:

On the whole the past season has not been favourable as that of the preceding year. The crops, for some unexplainable reason, have been lower, and the condition of the stock generally for beef purposes has not been quite so good. Good prices, however, have been the rule.

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. What year is that report for?

Mr. DAVIN. For the year ending 30th June, 1897.

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. That is when the change came into effect. The reorganization took effect just at that time, so it could not have caused the loss.

Mr. DAVIN. It took effect, I think, some time before.

Motion agreed to. Bill read the second time, and the House resolved itself into committee.

(In the Committee.)

On section 1,

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. I explained this section when introducing the Bill. Section 33 is that section of the Indian Act which provides for the imposition of statute labour or road work ordered upon an Indian reserve. It provides that the duty of performing this labour may be imposed upon the Indians on a reserve engaged in the pursuit of agriculture as their principal means of support. The amendment will strike out the words limiting the imposition of this duty on those Indians who are engaged in agriculture, so that all the

Mr. SIFTON.

Indians on a reserve may be rendered liable for the performance of their duty.

On section 2,

Mr. DAVIN. Would the hon. gentleman explain how this will work? I understand it to prevent any Indian applying to have a lease made. The whole band will have to consent to the lease.

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. There is a specific form in which the lease is given. It is given by a council meeting. The only effect of this amendment is to add to the old law and allow the Superintendent General to dispose to the best advantage, in the interests of the Indians, the wild grass or dead timber. If an application is made to him to purchase the dead timber on a survey, he may sell it, for the benefit of the Indians of course, but he need not get the consent of the council. I want to avoid going through the formality of getting the authority of the Indian council to sell dead timber or wild hay on a reserve.

On section 6,

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. If the hon. gentleman will look at the fifteenth line on the third page of the Bill, in section 6, he will see that the effect of this is to re-enact the old section and re-insert therein the words commencing in line 15, as follows:

For surveys, for compensation to Indians, for improvements, for any interests they have in land taken from them.

The effect, therefore, is that the Governor in Council may, subject to the general provisions of the Act, make use of the Indian funds which belong to the band for these purposes in addition to the others mentioned in that section. For instance, at present the law is just the same, except that we have not the power to use the savings of the band for surveys or compensating the Indians for lands taken from them. We may use the funds at present for the management of the reserve, and for the construction or repairs of roads, bridges, ditches, waterworks and so on, but we cannot authorize the expenditure for surveys. Sometimes the survey of a reserve is most necessary, and it has happened in one or two cases that a few Indians have obstructed the passage of the necessary resolution, in order to prevent surveys, without which a considerable number of the Indians on a reserve could not get on satisfactorily. For that reason it was deemed desirable that the Government should have power, in a particular case in the interests of the band, to expend what may be necessary. It does not affect any reserves except those in the older portions of Canada.

Mr. DAVIN. Was Mr. Pontin paid out of the moneys of the Indians?

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. Dealing with Indians funds—some of the