

A petition was presented to Mr. Dewdney, and reads as follows:—

"1. That as far back as the year 1860, and up to 1879, we settled or squatted on lands situate on the banks of the Qu'Appelle River; erected comfortable dwellings and outbuildings thereon; ploughed and cultivated the soil, and by continued residence have complied with all the Government conditions.

"2. That we have erected a church and school in a central position; built and opened up roads and bridges, and made numerous improvements which are to-day of great value to the new settler.

"3. That the surveys lately made have discovered some of us to be on railway land, now owned by the Ontario and Qu'Appelle Land Company, whose agent has informed us that we must either buy the land from them or move off. In fact we are informed that they have sold some of the land at present occupied by a *bona fide* settler.

"4. That we have refused to comply with the request of the Ontario and Qu'Appelle Land Company, and claim a patent from the Crown for our respective pieces of land, or quarter-sections, fully believing that we are justly and legally entitled to the same. We would, therefore, respectfully ask Your Honor to lay our claims before the right hon. Minister of the Interior (who we know will do us justice in the matter), and request his earliest attention in the matter."

This petition is signed by forty-three half-breeds. The letter of enclosure is dated 29th of August, 1882. In it Governor Dewdney says:

"The declarations set forth in the petition are, to my knowledge, generally correct. I have informed the petitioners that I will duly communicate to them your answer in connection with the said petition.

"With reference to their claims I, yesterday, had the honor to address a telegram to you, and the recommendation therein contained I now beg to reiterate, as I glean that many of the claims are somewhat conflicting, and in some instances run part on even and part on odd numbered sections. I would respectfully suggest that either Mr. Commissioner Walsh or Mr. Inspector Pierce be instructed to examine into and adjust them on an equitable basis; and that, without delay, as the half-breeds interested are very uneasy about their holdings, and may be looked upon as the pioneers of the district."

On the 13th September, Mr. Andrew Russell writes Mr. Dewdney:

"The petition of the half-breeds will be submitted to the Minister on his return to the Department."

No answer was given to the petition. On the 19th March, more than six months after, Mr. Dewdney again wrote:

"Last summer I forwarded a petition from the half-breeds, in reference to their claims in this district, to the Department of Interior, on the occasion of a claim being made by the Qu'Appelle and Ontario Land Company to some of their land.

"There are a number of half-breeds in this district who have been settled in the Qu'Appelle valley for many years. These went on their usual hunt for buffalo, returning to their homes at different times during each year. Others have settled since 1879, and remained pretty constantly on their land.

"The Dominion land surveys have demonstrated that many of them have been living on the same section; and, as land became valuable, a scramble was made by land speculators to obtain the right titles and interests of those settled in the most favored localities."

I wish to call attention to the fact that those people had years before asked for surveys, according to the plan of settlement. They made a like request to the Government subsequently, but the Government paid no heed to their request. When the Government commenced to survey the country, they surveyed it on the rectangular system, and in some instances the people had only a mere gore or a fraction of a lot; and in case there was not a sufficient distance, if the Government had surveyed the lands properly, they could have acquired the amount of land to which they would have been entitled as ordinary settlers. But the Government adopted a plan of survey which was altogether unsuited to the physical circumstances of the country, and was seriously injurious to the settlers themselves. He goes on to say:

"The sooner the claims of these half-breeds are determined the better, as a number of them are *bona fide* settlers and deserve consideration. These settlers have not claimed their land as was done in some parts of the North-West by small frontages running back some miles although the bulk of them build their homesteads close to each other and near the water where they could easily catch fish."

In this statement Mr. Dewdney is mistaken because the petitions sent to the Government three or four years ago show that the Government could have made the surveys in conformity with the plan of settlement. But the Govern-

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ment surveyed it differently, and they were willing to accept this after the survey was made if a fair distribution of the land was made, and they were protected from disturbance by the colonisation company, into whose hands the Government had placed those lands. He goes on to say:

"They, however, consider they are entitled to as much land in area as they would have been had they taken up their claims as 'had been the custom with half-breeds.'"

Mr. Dewdney then goes on to suggest a mode of settlement. He urges the appointment of a perfectly independent man, one in no way connected with the speculators in the Qu'Appelle districts. This communication was referred on the 6th July to Mr. Walsh. Mr. J. R. Hall, acting Secretary, writes:

"I am directed by the Minister of the Interior to send you herewith the enclosed copies of the correspondence concerning the claims of certain half-breed settlers in the Qu'Appelle Valley and to request that you will at your convenience investigate and report upon these claims."

It will be observed that the petitions of the half-breeds were declared urgent in August, 1882, and they were referred to Mr. Walsh in July, 1883, eleven months after. Now it will be observed that while the Department, eleven months after they were telegraphed to, after they were told that the colonisation company were warning them off their lands, after they were told that those people were uneasy, that they required assurances, that the matter ought to be settled, eleven months after, they referred the matter to the commissioner for his favorable consideration, to be investigated, not at once, but at his convenience. In December, 1883, Mr. J. W. Jackson, member of the North-West Council for this district, writes the Department that he has been waited upon by a large deputation of half-breeds, who say that the Government have been repeatedly petitioned and memorialised to settle the claims of the half-breeds; that there are half-breeds in the Territory who have never received anything from the Government but who deserve consideration. So that there was no settlement up to this time. Jackson's letter was not answered till the 13th March, 1884, when Mr. Hall, on behalf of the Minister, writes:

"The Minister has himself been very anxious to have this question settled and on the 18th of September last, Mr. Walsh, the Commissioner of Dominion Lands at Winnipeg, was instructed to visit this locality, and make an investigation into the claims of these half-breeds and other matters. Owing, however, to an unusual pressure of business Mr. Walsh has so far been unable to visit the locality, but he has again been written to and requested to make this investigation at the earliest possible opportunity."

These claims were only settled by the half-breed commission in 1885. Now, I am not going to trouble the House any further with a reference to this question, but I give those instances to show the neglect and the delay which took place in the settlement. I have shown the House that there was every facility for the survey of these settlements in the North-West Territories in the year 1880, and yet we find that in the year 1885 many of these settlements on the Saskatchewan were not surveyed, and these people had not their claims settled or dealt with and that the plan of survey was not at all in conformity with the plan of settlement. I can easily understand how the Government might object to changing their plan of survey if the country was vacant at the time the survey was made, but I confess I do not understand why the Government should have carried out the particular plan of survey which was not best adapted to the physical circumstances of the country, but was altogether at variance with the actual plan of settlement of the country before the survey was made at all. There is but one other matter to which I wish to refer, and that is the question of the issue of patents. There was not only negligence in the survey of the country, there was not only an improper plan of survey, there was not only a total failure to give the people the assurances to which they were entitled, but there has been negligence in the issue of patents, not only to the half-breed population, but to the