

more difficult to Indian officials than to apportion the amount of food given to Indians living on a reservation, so as to stimulate them to work and keep them at work. I believe the fault has been that the Indian officials have endeavored to exercise economy—the Government has been pleased that economy should be exercised—and the House would be prompt to find fault if the Government dealt with the Indians in the liberal spirit advocated by the hon. member for Brant. A great deal has been said in the country about dishonesty in the Indian Department. I took the trouble to enquire into that matter, and I asked in the whole Qu'Appelle District whether the people knew of dishonesty on the part of Indian officials, and only one case was mentioned, and that was by a man who has such a notoriously bad character that no one would believe his statements in regard to such a matter. I came to the conclusion that the Indian officials were honest men, that the only fault was that some of them had been too rigid for economy, and had committed errors in giving Indians food under the circumstances in which they were placed. As to their honesty, no charge against their honesty was brought against them. There is one point with which no doubt the Indian Department are aware, and it is worth considering when speaking of Indians, and that is as to their physical condition. It is a common complaint that they cannot live upon the pork supplied, and it is necessary they should have fresh meat. There is nothing that causes among them so much disease and suffering as being compelled to eat salt meat, which, of course, the Government are occasionally obliged to give them. I speak, of course, under correction by members who are more familiar with the subject than I am, but I know the Indians can hardly be induced to eat salt meat, although they generally receive it of very good quality. With respect to the charge of the hon. member for South Brant (Mr. Paterson) as to the quality of the flour, I think the evidence he laid before the House afforded a sufficient refutation of the charge he made. At any rate the evidence he brought in support of his charges as to the quality of the flour, was no stronger than that adduced in the opposite direction. I pressed him to read Mr. Wadsworth's statements, because Mr. Wadsworth is a gentleman who is well known to many members of this House from the Province of Ontario as a man upon whose word the most implicit confidence can be put, a man well acquainted with the matters with which he has to deal, and one in whose integrity every man who knows him will place entire confidence. I think, that in dealing with Indians hereafter, the great trouble will be to feed them just exactly in that proportion which will stimulate them to work, and, at the same time, will be sufficient to keep them from suffering from want of food. I may have expressed myself clumsily, but I think hon. gentlemen understand the difficulty, and that it is in endeavoring to hit that happy medium that the Indian officials have failed and have not supplied them as far as they ought. That is a difficulty to which, I have no doubt, the Government will pay every attention.

Mr. FAIRBANK. I do not rise for the purpose of prolonging the debate, which has already been amply handled on this side of the House, but I rise to call attention to a very improper remark made by an hon. gentleman opposite. He has spoken in reference to the Rev. Mr. Robertson, a gentleman with whom I happen to have a slight acquaintance, having met him in the discharge of his duties in that country, having listened to his preaching, and knowing him very well by reputation. When an hon. member in this House stands up in his place and makes a remark like this: "I know something of the Rev. Mr. Robertson which I am not going to refer to here," I submit that that gentleman has either said too much or not enough.

Mr. O'BRIEN.

Mr. CAMERON (Middlesex). I regret, Sir, that the statements which have been made so specifically upon this side of the House have not met with the reply from the Government which was to be expected, from the seriousness of their character. We cannot, under the circumstances as they have been submitted to this House to-night, but say that, whether the general denial that one or two gentlemen have made covers the case or not to the satisfaction of hon. gentlemen opposite, there must be left in the country a considerable amount of misgiving as to the management of Indian affairs in the North-West. The hon. member for South Leeds (Mr. Ferguson) said he was prepared to defend the character of the Indian women with reference to the charges which have been made against them on this occasion, and have frequently, before now, been made with reference to them in the House. Unfortunately, I do not think that the case lies in that direction, as much as in the necessity for defending the Indian officials in the North-West, and not only the Indian officials, but the North-West Mounted Police, in reference to whom the reports of the Department submitted to this House, too closely bear out the statements which have been made as to their immorality and their treatment of the Indian women. We have had some representations by the same gentleman as to the character of the food supplies, and, particularly, speaking from his own observations, of the flour supplies of 1883. But the hon. gentleman will recollect that the Department itself has practically given a contradiction to any statements of the character that he has submitted here to-night, from the fact that they made a very decided reduction in the amount of the bill of I. G. Baker & Co., who had the contract for those supplies. I think we have had a sufficient number of denials of similarly specific charges against the Government to make us perfectly satisfied that when they find no other means open for successful defence, a general denial is their resort. We know that hon. gentlemen opposite denied the sale of a particular railway charter, when at the same time there was plain proof of its sale. We know besides that there was a denial in this House that the rebel Riel had been paid to leave this country, when it was known on the statement of Archbishop Taché that such was the fact. We know, too, that there were denials that there were grievances in the North-West, at the same time that a commission was on its way from the Province of Ontario to settle these grievances, and that, as a result, in the neighborhood of 2,000 of the claims that were being preferred against the Government were practically settled by that commission. Now, I propose for a moment or two to examine the accounts which have already been referred to some extent by some of the speakers who have preceded me on this side of the House. But before doing so, I would say that in the neighboring country they have had difficulties similar to those in this country. While these difficulties existed there, we took pride in the reflection that in Canada the Indians had until recently been so well treated, that under no circumstances had they been forced into an uprising such as had been of frequent occurrence in the country to the south of us. Unfortunately we are not able to claim credit for the existence of such a state of affairs any longer. It is still more unfortunate that while in the neighboring country the Indian was the prey of the frontiersman and the cattle driver, in Canada he has been the prey of the Government of the day. Large appropriations have been made during the past five or six years; large enough certainly to have justified the expectation that the 21,000 or 22,000 Indians who are under treaty, living on their reserves in the North-West, would have remained reasonably satisfied. We know that the Indian nature is one of childlike contentment with its surroundings so long as he is fairly treated. The misfortune in our case was that the question was not, apparently, how many