

population and life of the country is all the greater reason why good faith should be kept with them.

There is another side to this question that I wish to refer to. It is this: The Government of British Columbia assert a claim to the land included in the reserves occupied by the Indians of that province. As they hold, the Indians are not the owners of the lands of their reserves. They hold that the province is the owner of these lands, that the Indians are only occupants and that the Indians have no right beyond that right of occupation. I need not say that no government of Canada up to the present time has ever been able to accept that view. Of course, it has been recognized that the British Columbia Government, being an important and responsible part of the system of government in this country, is entitled to hold such view as it may please in regard to matters that come within its sphere of influence and it must necessarily be recognized that, if the Government of British Columbia claims to own the land that is in the Indian reserves, the Indians then do not hold a clear title to the land. That was a difficulty that the late Government had to face in dealing with the Indian question and with the question of reserve lands in British Columbia. It is a question that should be decided as soon as possible and it is a question that must necessarily go for decision, unless one party or the other gives up its contention, to the Imperial Privy Council. I am going to take the liberty of saying here and now that the late Government, during several years, used every endeavour to arrive at an arrangement with the Government of British Columbia whereby a case would be submitted to the Privy Council which would decide the ownership of these lands. It was distinctly because of the action of the British Columbia Government that the matter was not advanced towards a conclusion. Be that as it may, it must be evident that, if the Indians are to have value for the land that they occupy, the question of ownership must be settled before a price is fixed. It is evident that, if the Indian has not a good title to his land, he cannot get the price for his rights that he would get if he had a complete title. Therefore, it is surely the duty of the Government that is charged with protecting the interests of the Indians to secure a settlement of the question of title as soon as possible and not allow the rights of the Indians to be set aside until the question of title has been settled. That is the view apparently that was taken by the Indian Department in their reply to Mr. Calkins. He was told that his offer would not be dealt with until the question of title had been settled. But, apparently, the Indian Department at Ottawa is that part of the machinery of government in Canada which has the least to say and which knows the least in regard to a matter which is most closely and

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intimately under its jurisdiction. In view of the importance of this transaction itself, the amount of money involved, the interest of the band of Indians concerned, the principle that is at stake, the far-reaching effect of that principle, if it is adopted, but more especially the necessity of keeping good faith with the Indians in discharge of the obligations and responsibilities laid upon this Government by the Imperial Government, I bring this matter to the attention of the House and I ask for the fullest and most complete statement that can be made in regard to it.

Right Hon. R. L. BORDEN (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have had a rather extraordinary deliverance from the hon. member for Edmonton (Mr. Oliver), in which he has based serious charges against the British Columbia Government, and particularly against the Attorney General of that province, upon newspaper clippings without apparently taking any other means to ascertain whether or not his attack upon the attorney general of that province is in any way justified by the facts. The hon. gentleman's remarks are also very singular for another reason—that in this case, as well as in the Donaldson case, to which he alluded—he seemed more concerned in apologizing for his own action as Minister of the Interior and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, than with respect to the particular matter to which he directed attention. He informed us, as the fact is, that in 1911 he became responsible to Parliament and the country for the passing of a special Act by which the Songhees reserve was placed under the ownership and control of the provincial Government of British Columbia upon certain terms to which he has alluded. He informed us somewhat explicitly that the course which he took then was absolutely wrong and has been attended with the most deplorable results. That seems to be rather an extraordinary prelude to a demand that this Government shall pay better regard to those sacred rights of the Indians which we all recognize but which he was not so particular in recognizing when he had to do with the transfer of the St. Peter's reserve. My hon. friend, in the concluding portion of his remarks, stated that it was absolutely impossible to fix properly and definitely any price for the Indian reserves of British Columbia until a certain question had been determined by the Supreme Court of Canada or by the Privy Council. The attitude of the province of British Columbia on this matter was exactly the same in 1911 as it is to-day, and I ask the hon. gentleman how he was able to fix a price in 1911 for the Songhees Indian reserve, since the difficulty was as manifest then as it is now. He has placed himself in a most unfortunate position by his statement in that respect.