

Mr. KENNEDY (Edmonton): What is the policy of the department with regard to some of the Indian reserves where the Indians have nearly all died? In my own constituency there are some very large reserves which used to be occupied by two hundred Indians but on which there are now only about ten. Then, there are small reserves which, after being farmed to some extent, were abandoned, and are now producing a splendid crop of weeds, wild oats and so on. Would the department consider the leasing of such land as that? I would ask also if it is the intention to retain the larger reserves where the numbers of Indians have materially decreased, or will the department dispose of some of them, and if so under what conditions?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): If the land is fit for agricultural purposes and is not required by the band, the practice of the department has been to try to secure a surrender from the band and sell the land to white settlers.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): I wish to call the attention of the minister to the dissatisfaction which prevails among the Indians on the Blackfoot reserve in Alberta. They have many complaints, the chief of which is that under the terms of surrender agreement they were induced, they say, to consent to a reduction of their rations during the war from seven pounds of meat and seven pounds of flour a week to five pounds of meat and five pounds of flour a week, and a pound of tea, I think, every two months. They were under the impression that when the war was finished they would go back to the old scale, and they are dissatisfied now that many years have elapsed since the conclusion of the war and they are still on the war rations. The minister will realize that adults can hardly be expected to subsist on five pounds of meat and five pounds of flour a week—it seems miserable. If the minister has any explanation to offer I would like to have it.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I had no knowledge, until the matter was brought to my attention by the hon. gentleman some weeks ago, that there was any difficulty about rations on this reserve. My own idea is that we should carry out to the letter our contract with the Indians; that is the first principle we should lay down. On the other hand, the Indians on the Blackfoot reserve should be rapidly brought to a point where they are self-supporting. They are on splendid land; they can raise cattle; they have every opportunity of getting along well. It may be our fault that they are not self-supporting; I am

[Mr. Evans.]

not saying it is theirs. However, as I have said, I am prepared to carry out to the fullest extent any arrangement that was made with the Indians.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): The Indians tell me, through their chiefs, that during the winter and spring they actually go out into the reserve and gather up dead horseflesh and eat it, because they cannot get any other food. Of course, that is obviously improper. There are a number of other complaints that I would like the minister to investigate. One of them dates back to the campaign for greater production. The Indians tell me that they were charged \$35 a set for harness that could have been purchased from any mail order house for \$16 at that time. I would be glad if the minister would investigate that complaint. There is one other complaint, which is more sentimental than anything else. Some of the minor Indian chiefs wish to have the right to delegate to a successor at the time of death the chieftainship or honour which they may themselves possess. A man named Russa, an Indian brave, was bequeathed by a minor chief his chieftainship; this was about two years ago when the chief was dying. The agent informed the Indians that he had communicated with Ottawa but that no reply had been received; and no reply had been received up to last fall when I was there. Little things of this kind are very keenly felt by the Indian mind. Before I pass from that, may I ask the minister whether he has any knowledge of that particular incident?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Yes. In nearly all the western provinces an Indian chieftainship is not hereditary but elective, so that it would be in direct conflict with the elective system to attempt to pass the chieftainship down in hereditary line. We have a great deal of difficulty on the Six Nations reserve about that very thing. They have an hereditary system there and a very strong exception is taken to it by a great many of the Indians on the reserve, and as a result there is conflict going on all the time. With all due deference to the wishes of the chief I might say frankly that I would oppose the hereditary system as against the elective, which I think is much more modern and much more in the interests of the Indian.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): The chief did not give me to understand that they desired the hereditary system. I asked the question very pointedly when this matter was brought to my attention: Was the chieftainship delegated to this new man by the will