

# **THE COST OF SERVICES TO INDIANS, WITH AN EXHIBIT OF THEIR RESOURCES AND INCOME.**

It is a question worth considering by the leading members of both political parties, whether it would not be wise to appoint a commission to enquire into the public expenditures with a view to some measures being taken to introduce economies in the administration of the public departments. In 1876-77, and the first half of 1878 a vigorous onslaught was made upon the government of the day because of its alleged extravagance.

In those years the expenditure on account of Consolidated Fund, that is, the ordinary working expenses of governing Canada, had been on an average 23½ millions of dollars, which was equal to \$5.22 per head of population. In 1879 a rise of one million dollars took place, and the process of expansion has been continuous since that year, until in 1899 the amount reached \$41,903,501, which, at the highest estimate of population to-day, equals \$7.90 per head. As both parties have each in turn demanded retrenchment in public expenditures, there is no partisanship in suggesting that both of them take some practical step to ascertain where the extravagance complained of exists, and what policy should be adopted to enforce greater economy. Generalities sound well on platforms, but business demands, "condescending to particulars," as our Scotch friends say. One item in the public accounts seems to call for investigation in the interests of economy. This is the expenditure on the Indians in Canada, which last year amounted to \$986,220 out of the current revenue, and of \$238,111 out of the amount at credit of the Indian Fund, making a total parliamentary appropriation for the Indians of \$1,224,366. The smaller sum, however, we regard as rightfully due to these people, being secured them by treaty. On the larger sum, however, they have no claim.

The following statistics, drawn from official returns relating to the expenditures on Indians, the resources of those people, their earnings and opportunities of being independent of government aid, can be profitably studied by those economically inclined. The districts wherein the Indians reside, the number in each area, and the average amount spent per head in each district in 1899 were as follows:

	Num- bers.	Expendi- ture.	Cost per head.
Maritime Provinces.....	3,935	\$ 16,130	\$4.10
Ontario and Quebec.....	31,443	79,953	2.54
Manitoba and Northwest.....	34,907	778,693	20.01
British Columbia.....	24,696	111,444	4.51
Total.....	98,981	\$986,220	ave. \$9.86

In the grant for Maritime Province Indians the sum of \$2,817 is included, which seems large for a total expenditure of only \$13,313 for all other purposes. The salaries' item for British Columbia is \$19,549, which also is very heavy for the expendi-

ture of \$90,247. The salary item for Manitoba and Northwest generally is not given, but the sum of \$4,150 is placed apart as the cost of 2 inspectors for "general" service. The total salaries specified amount to \$26,516, which is a considerable sum considering that the total expenditure, apart from them, amounts to \$959,704, a very large portion of which is paid also for personal services to medical men, school teachers, etc.

We will now show what resources are possessed by the Indians available for their maintenance outside the grants of public money. For convenience of statement in our columns we divide the areas within which the Indians reside into three groups; the first comprises Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces; the second, Manitoba and the North districts, and the third, British Columbia, which we designate respectively Eastern Canada, Middle Canada and Western Canada:

Resources and Earnings of Indians.	Eastern Canada.	Middle Canada.	Western Canada.
No. of acres cultivated.....	58,404	16,495	15,650
do cleared.....	.....	2,077,910	312,646
Value of agric. implements.....	\$ 173,153	\$ 159,130	\$ 104,823
Value of live stock.....	292,280	609,347	413,273
Value of fishing plant.....	76,835	.....	.....
Value of household goods.....	321,697	205,681	344,458
Value of real and personal prop'y.	5,891,707	6,406,240	5,646,533
Number of horses owned, No.....	3,986	.....	14,064
Number of oxen " No.....	5,240	.....	6,444
Number of sheep " No.....	872	.....	1,538
Number of pigs " No.....	7,517	.....	551
Grain harvested, bushels.....	490,919	72,473	164,834
Roots " bushels.....	179,840	71,084	135,318
Hay " tons.....	22,372	55,565	13,401
Total income of Indians.....	\$1,132,343	\$ 583,106	\$1,165,736

The form adopted by the Department for Indian affairs in the annual report renders it exceedingly tedious to extract the details for making up a summary like the above, which is much to be regretted, as a complete statement of the economic condition of the "wards of the nation," the Indians, are most desirable to be exhibited to the public. We believe the above table will be a great surprise, as, even in official circles, we have reason to say, that the earnings and income and resources of the Indians in Canada are entirely unknown. We learn from above that their total income last year was \$2,881,185, that is, their income from labour, from agriculture and other pursuits. This does not include the value of the products they raised, or the food they captured, upon which they lived, and which, generally speaking, raised them into a position of entire independence of outside help. Indeed, the economic position of the Indians, judging only from the official Reports, was superior to that of the lower class of labourers and artisans. The display of their resources, their earning powers, their income, their enormous accumulation of valuable property in household goods, farm implements, horses, cattle, oxen and other live stock, suggests the question, whether the time is not at hand for relieving the public at large from some considerable portion of the money expended in administering the Indian affairs of Canada.