

any proposition be made to us by the Government, we would not trust them; we would demand a full understanding of everything, and that all be made subjects of regular treaty between us and them. Mr. McBride claimed many reserves are larger than the Indians need, and much of the land remains uncultivated. We of the Interior claim this is not so. We think we at least should have as much land of our own country to farm as is allowed to white settlers (viz.: 160 acres), or as much as our Indian friends of Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Montana retain on the opening of their reserves (viz.: from 80 to 160 acres of the best agricultural land available, chosen by themselves, for each man, woman and child). At the time the Indian Reserves of British Columbia were set apart, and for long afterwards, the British Columbia Government allowed 320 acres of land to each white person pre-empting land from them. As at this time our population was much greater than now, the amount of reservation land per capita would be smaller in proportion, and the farce of the Reserves being adequate when set apart all the more apparent. We ask Mr. McBride to state the amount of good land in the Reserves which can be successfully cultivated by us under present conditions. Why should we be expected to make a good living on four or five acres of land, whilst in 1881 and later 320 acres was deemed none too much for a white man? Pasture need not be taken into consideration at that date, as then the unfenced range country formed a sufficient pasturage, and was used equally as much by whites as by Indians. A few of the reserves may appear large on paper, but what amount of good land is in them? Most of them consist chiefly of more or less barren side hills, rock slides, timbered bottoms hard to clear, and arid flats devoid of water for irrigation. In very few places do we have any chance to have good farms, and they must of necessity be small in area. Either the land or the water is lacking. In many places even the total acreage of the reserves is exceedingly small. All parts of all reserves known to us are used by us one way and another as fully as possible, considering our present disadvantageous position, and the nature of the lands. If by occupancy Mr. McBride means actual living on or cultivating of each part of reserve, then we plead guilty to our inability to occupy the greater part of them, for we cannot live on and cultivate rocks, side hills and places where we can get no water. Even in many places that we do occupy fully, and cultivate continually, we lose our crops altogether, or in part, every year, owing to whites taking the irrigation water, and stopping us from using it when we most require it under the claim of prior rights to the water. In this they are sustained by the British Columbia Government who recognize their water records as superior to ours. Mr. McBride also said the Indians share in enjoying the advantages arising from building of railroads, wagon roads, trails and other Government utilities. Perhaps we do, but have we not assisted in building them, and have they not been built up from the direct robbery of ourselves, and our country? We claim these things are rightfully ours, and yet we are made to pay for using them. Had we never assisted in the making of these railways and roads; had his Government paid us for all our timber that was used, and all our fifty millions of gold taken out of this country, and all our salmon that has been caught, and destroyed, and many other things which might be mentioned that went into the making of these roads; had we been paid only a small share of all this wealth derived from the destruction (in most cases), not the improvement of our country; or had the country been bought from us, so it were actually the property of the whites to destroy or do with as they pleased, then the British Columbia Government might speak of our sharing in the benefits of roads to which they infer we are in no way entitled. Good trails we had in plenty before the whites came. The whites are indebted to us for having them ready made when they came, and allowing them to use them without charge. The wagon roads benefit us but little, for most of them do not go to our reserves, and besides, we have no chance to have much produce to haul over them. Railroads have not helped us much. They cut up our little farms, and give us no adequate compensation. They have killed many of us, and also many of our horses and cattle since their advent. Besides they act as highways for robber whites, and all kinds of broken men who frequently break into our houses and steal from us.

We never asked that any of these things be built so we could share in them, and we well know they were not built for our benefit. Government utilities such as the police, for instance, we see no benefit in, for they are used to force laws on us we never agreed to, and some of which we consider injurious and unjust. This, then, appears to be all the British Columbia Government can claim to have done for us, viz.: They let us use a few inferior spots of our own country to live on, and say we ought to be grateful to them for giving us such large pieces. They made some roads of various kinds for themselves, and say we ought to be grateful for being allowed to share in the use of them. We ask is this the brotherly help that was promised us in early days, or is it their compensation to us for the spoliation of our country, stealing of our lands, water, timber, pastures, our game, fish, roots, fruits, etc., and the introduction of diseases, poverty, hard labor, jails, unsuitable laws, whisky, and ever so many other things injurious to us? Now you have the British Columbia Government's statements re these questions, and you have our statements. We leave it to you to decide who has done wrong. We or they. We desire a complete settlement of our whole land question, and the making of treaties which will cover everything of moment to us in our relations between the whites of this country as represented by their Governments, and we as Indian tribes. As the British Columbia Government through Mr. McBride has refused to consider any means of settling these matters legally, we call on the Dominion Government at Ottawa—the central and supreme Government of Canada—to have the question of title to our lands of this country brought into court and settled. We appeal to you for what we consider justice, and what we think you would yourself consider justice if you were in our position. Who has the power to help us in this matter?

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