

ing. Their finding will be subject to ratification by this Parliament, or to ratification by a decision of the courts of this land, or by the courts of final appeal in the Mother Land. The question of the adequacy of the price is the chief question. The first duty cast upon the Government is to see that the Indians receive an adequate price and adequate treatment from the province of British Columbia in this connection.

Hon. T. W. CROTHERS: Acting for the time being for the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, I may be expected to say a word or two in regard to this matter. My hon. friend (Mr. Guthrie) has told us that we are not now concerned with the Songhees reserve at Victoria, but that we are concerned with this particular transaction. I think the tone of his remarks satisfied everyone who heard them that he was not so much concerned on behalf of the Indians, as he is concerned to try to make a point against this Government. In that he will signally fail. The chief objection of my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition was that these Indians had surrendered their interests in this reserve for an inadequate sum. I know very well that my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition knows that the Indians did not surrender their interests in this reserve. He knows that an Indian is not capable of surrendering his interest in any reserve. He knows that whatever rights the Indians had in this reserve on the 9th day of April of this year—I believe that is the date that my hon. friend from Edmonton mentioned—they have to-day, simply because this Government has not given its consent to the surrender of those rights, whatever they are. So that my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition need not trouble himself as to whether the price is adequate or inadequate. The Indians had no right to surrender their right, and whatever rights they had they have to-day. The Indian is merely a child who cannot sell his interest in his reserve.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: My hon. friend will pardon me; the law requires that the Indian should be consulted, and should give his consent.

Mr. CROTHERS: Surely, but there is a material difference between asking the Indian to give his consent and permitting him to act without our consent.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Certainly.

Mr. CROTHERS: There is a statute which makes it necessary that the Government should consent as well as the Indian. It takes two to make a bargain in this case.

Mr. GUTHRIE: Three.

Mr. CROTHERS: The Indian and his guardian.

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Sir WILFRID LAURIER: And the other man makes three.

Mr. CROTHERS: Two on the one side, and one on the other side. The Indian is supposed to be protected by this Government, and he can do nothing by himself respecting his property. Therefore it does not matter what he did on the 9th of April, if it was done without the consent of this Government; his rights are not affected at all. It is a little surprising to find my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) so much more interested in the Indian to-day than he was in the year 1910 when he said in substance: Make any bargain you like with the Indian, whatever satisfies him will satisfy us. You would scarcely conceive that to be possible from the observations made by my right hon. friend to-day, but the very first sentence in his reply to a telegram which he received from Mr. McBride, on the 26th October, 1910, shows that he was not very much interested in the Indians at that time.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Quite the reverse.

Mr. CROTHERS: My right hon. friend seemed to think there was no responsibility and no duty resting upon him to see to it that the Indians of those days got justice.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Quite the reverse. That matter was pending for years, and the question was to get the consent of the Indians.

Mr. CROTHERS: It does not matter whether it was pending for two years or ten years. This was his reply:

Have consulted with the Minister of the Interior.

That was the hon. member for Edmonton, who was not half so much interested then in the Indians as he appears to be to-day.

Have consulted with the Minister of the Interior, and any arrangement satisfactory to the Indians will be quite acceptable to us.

Make any bargain you like with the Indians, we do not care a nickel about them. His words could not be interpreted to mean anything else, and they were not only the words of the leader of the Opposition, but of the hon. member for Edmonton, because the then leader of the Government in his message to Mr. McBride, said he had consulted the Minister of the Interior. So we had the Prime Minister in the person of the right hon. gentleman who now leads the Opposition, and the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, in the person of the hon. member who to-day represents Edmonton, putting their heads together to fix up a reply to Mr. McBride; this is what they said: