

176. Annual Grant to Supplement the Indian Fund,
Ontario and Quebec, and the Maritime Pro-
vinces..... \$31,880.00

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. The two first items are the regular votes. There is an increase of \$600 under the item for Indian schools in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. That is to provide for the establishment of two additional schools in the Province of Nova Scotia, at Lunenburg and Halifax. This matter has been strongly pressed on the Department, and the officers hold that such additional schools are absolutely necessary.

Mr. SCRIVER. I desire to call the attention of the hon. First Minister to a matter respecting which I had the privilege of directing his attention several months ago, in connection with the Indians of Quebec—the situation of affairs in the township of Dundee, in the constituency which I have the honor to represent. That township is made up of an Indian reserve. The lands were leased many years ago to the persons who now occupy them. The first leases granted were long leases—some for ninety-nine years and some for 999 years, and most of the shorter leases contained the privilege of renewal at the option of the tenant. After the greater part of the lands were leased under long tenures the policy of the Department was changed, and short leases extending over thirty years, mostly without the privilege of renewal at the option of the tenant, were granted to persons now in the occupation of those lands. Most of those leases have expired, some of them years ago, and the tenants are occupying the lands, as it were, upon sufferance. Most of the lands were taken in a state of nature, and have been rendered valuable by the labors of the tenants. Representations were made, I understand, by the Indians to the Department last year to the effect that they were desirous of occupying some of the lands and cultivating them. They represented that the portion of the reserve which they were cultivating was not sufficient, and that they desired some of the farms, the leases of which had expired, and that if such were given them it would be a great boon conferred, and they would cultivate the lands. Last autumn, as I learn from the report of the hon. Minister of the Interior, notices to surrender were served upon some of the tenants who were required to give up their lands on 31st December. These notices, however, have not been enforced. As the hon. gentleman will perhaps remember, I, in company with a delegation from the tenants, represented to him that it was very inadvisable to enforce the surrender of those lands. I took occasion then, as I take occasion now, to represent to him that it would not really be in the interest of the Indians to concede to their demands. It is within my knowledge that they have not cultivated the portion of land which they promised to cultivate, and that there is a considerable extent which has not been cultivated at all. Like their brethren of the Caughnawaga tribe, they devote themselves to other pursuits than agriculture, and their attempts in farming are not such as would warrant the belief that they would make good use of the lands they now desire to occupy if they were surrendered to them. The hon. gentleman, I am sure, knows enough of the Indian character and habits to be satisfied that they would not be desirable neighbors, if they were placed in possession of those lands. They would, in some instances, have white people holding lands under long leases as neighbors, and I am afraid, if they kept cattle, they would not maintain their fences in good order, that difficulties would arise, and in many ways they would prove undesirable neighbors to white people living there. Moreover, I may say that the notices which have been served do not affect lands actually occupied by the tenants; they are in some instances wholly or partially marsh lands, and in a few instances lands which have been cultivated and improved, but not actually occupied; that is to say, they

Mr. DAWSON.

have no buildings upon them. If the Indians were to settle upon them I doubt whether they would be able to make a living, they would certainly not be able to do so on the marsh lands. What I venture to suggest as a much better solution of the difficulty than the one proposed by the Department is, that the Government bring pressure to bear on the Indians to consent to a renewal of the leases, if not on the same terms as heretofore, on some terms which would be reasonable and equitable. I really believe this would be in the interest of the Indians themselves, and it would most assuredly be in the interests of the white people. This certainly if enforced with reference to the lands, notices with regard to which have been served on the occupants, why there is nothing to prevent a similar course being pursued with respect to the lands actually in occupation; and it would certainly be a very great hardship to turn men out of their lands, if this could be done, without compensation for the improvements they have made, and throw them on the world after they have spent a long time in making these lands, as is the case in many instances, valuable properties and homesteads for themselves and their children. I really hope that the hon. Minister will give this matter his attention, that the notices to surrender will not be enforced, and that the other alternative which I have taken the liberty to suggest, and which I am satisfied will be in the real interest of the Indians themselves, will be followed.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I would say, with respect to the Indians, that, of course, I am acquainted with the subject, because the hon. gentleman made me acquainted with it when he called on me in company of a deputation from Dundee. It is a matter—as, of course, is the case where Indian questions are concerned—which is surrounded with some difficulty. On the one hand, the white settler complains very much of the Indians being bad farmers and bad neighbors in that sense; and then, on the other hand, the Indians say that the land is ours; we have a right to it, and if we do not get the land we must have its value. I was rather under the impression that the hon. gentleman would have introduced a Bill to renew the old Act, for I thought that the hon. gentleman had rather charge of this matter. However, I would say that he presented the case of the settler very strongly and clearly to myself, and he took, I think, a very reasonable view of the matter. I must also say that the deputation, who were all interested, of course, in these lands, took a very reasonable view of it. With respect to the leases for 999 years, these lands are freeholds for all practical purposes. In fact, there was some idea during the early part of the settlement of Lower Canada, that they had not the power to alienate Indian lands in freehold, and they did the same thing by giving long leases. These were considered freehold; and then the ninety-nine years leases were looked upon as given for an eternity, with the privilege of renewing. They must be thus dealt with, of course, under the terms of the leases as perpetual; but there was a change of policy in the interest of the Indians, or in their supposed interests. Long leases were done away with, and thirty years' leases were granted without the privilege of renewal; therefore, of course, like any other lease, at the end of thirty years the land reverts to the owner of the soil. Well, the Indian owns the soil, and if they do not get the soil, they must get the value of it. Or, on the other hand, the settlers have been there, and most likely their fathers before them, for thirty years generally cover one and a-half generations or two generations; and they say it would be very hard to expel them from these lands which were worth very little when they settled on them and that they should be confirmed in the titles in some way. Notices were given in the manner the hon. gentleman has said, with the object of asserting title, of course—the Government being the trustee or guardian of