

half-breeds of Saskatchewan River ever formulated any demand as to lands before the year 1878, or the last days of 1877. The hon. gentleman said that demands had been made to the Government of my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie). I believe that some demands from the Qu'Appelle district were made before 1878, but no demand, so far as I am aware, from the banks of the Saskatchewan, came to the Government before 1878; and the reason is obvious. The country had just only been opened for settlement; the Government had not attempted to exercise authority over the territory for more than 3 years; Mr. Laird, who was the first Lieutenant Governor, was appointed in 1876, and he only reached Battleford in 1877; in fact it took him several months of travel to get at the seat of Government at Battleford. In 1877, a petition was formulated by the half-breeds, and it ran as follows:—

"Your petitioners would humbly represent that their rights to a participation in the issue of half-breed or old settlers scrip are as valid and binding as those of the half-breeds and old settlers of Manitoba, and are expected by them to be regarded as scrupulously as in that Province; and with a view to the adjustment of the same your petitioners would humbly request that a census of said half-breeds and old settlers be taken at as early a date as may be conveniently determined upon, with a view to apportioning to those of them, who have not already been included in the census of Manitoba, their just allotments of land and scrip."

Then, some time in the month of February, a deputation came from St. Laurent to interview Mr. Laird about the same matter, and they presented him a petition, making in substance, the same demand. This petition was addressed, not to the Government at Ottawa, but to the Lieutenant Governor himself; he referred it to his council; the council did not sit until the following month of August; and in that month the council adopted the resolution which has been several times quoted yesterday, whereby the claims of the half-breeds for an apportionment of land were presented to the favorable consideration of the Government at Ottawa. The resolution ran as follows:—

"That in view of the fact that grants of land and issues of scrip were made to the half-breeds of Manitoba towards the extinguishment of the Indian title to the lands of that Province, there will undoubtedly be general dissatisfaction among the half-breeds of the said Territories unless they receive some like consideration."

Then Mr. Laird visited Duck Lake settlement in the following month of September. He was again interviewed by a deputation of the St. Laurent settlement, and they asked him particulars as to what had become of their petition, and what treatment it had received at the hands of the Government. Mr. Laird explained that the council having sat only in August, the Government had not yet had time to consider their application. They were satisfied with the explanation, and their spokesmen cordially thanked the Lieutenant Governor for the kind manner in which he had replied to their enquiries. The half-breeds, it must be said, displayed on that occasion a most gentle spirit; they could not have acted with greater propriety. Then came the fall of the Mackenzie Government and a new Government came into power, the Government of the hon. gentleman opposite. In 1879 the Government took power to deal with the half-breeds in the same manner as the former Government took power to deal with the half-breeds of the Red River, and after the manner suggested by the North-West Council; that is to say, the Government took power for the extinguishment of the Indian title, in so far as it was vested in the half-breeds. Before going further, it is appropriate that we should at once, in order to fix the responsibility of the Government in this matter, refer to the whole legislation on this matter; the Act of 1870, which was the first Act, the Act of 1874, which was the second Act, and then the Act of 1879, to see exactly what was the purport and the object and the cause of the legislation then put upon the Statute Book. The Act of 1870 ran as follows:—

"And whereas it is expedient towards the extinguishment of the Indian title to the lands in the Province, to appropriate a portion of such ungranted lands, to the extent of 1,400,000 acres thereof, for the benefit of the families of the half-breed residents, it is hereby enacted, that, under regulations to be from time to time made by the Governor General in Council, the Lieutenant Governor shall select such lots or tracts in such parts of the Province as he may deem expedient, to the extent aforesaid, and divide the same among the children of the half-breed heads of families residing in the Province at the time of the said transfer to Canada."

So the object of the Act is perfectly clear; it is an allotment of land to the extent of 1,400,000 acres for the avowed purpose of dividing the same among the children of the heads of half-breed families, towards the extinguishment of the Indian title. Then the Act of 1874, ran as follows:—

"Whereas, by the 31st section of the Act 33 Victoria, chapter 3, it was enacted as expedient towards the extinguishment of the Indian title to the lands in the Province of Manitoba, to appropriate one million four hundred thousand acres of such lands, for the benefit of the children of the half-breed heads of families residing in the Province at the time of the transfer thereof to Canada; and whereas no provision has been made for extinguishing the Indian title to such lands as respects the half-breed heads of families residing in the Province at the period named; and whereas it is expedient to make such provision, and it is deemed advisable to effect the same by grant of land, or by any issue of scrip redeemable in Dominion lands."

Here, again, the same spirit is apparent, the same object is avowed. The grant is made in extinguishment of the Indian title, in so far as it was vested in the half-breeds; and in 1879, the Act passed by hon. gentlemen opposite upon this question, enacted as follows:—

"The Government have power to satisfy any claims existing in connection with the extinguishment of the Indian title, preferred by half-breeds resident in the North-West Territories outside of the limits of Manitoba, on the fifteenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and seventy, by granting land to such persons to such extent and on such terms and conditions, as may be deemed expedient."

So there cannot be any ambiguity. Provision was introduced in the last statute by hon. gentlemen opposite themselves with the express object of extinguishing the Indian title vested in the half-breeds. This Act never was put in force, its provisions never were carried out. What was the reason? We do not know yet. The Government never told us; I do not believe the Government know themselves the reason. But it was important that this provision should be acted upon. As early as 1879, the Government appointed Mr. Davin to make a report upon the matter. It does not appear he ever reported but it appears that several influential persons in the Territories, among them Archbishop Taché, were consulted on the matter. Upon the importance of at once dealing fairly and generously with the half-breeds. His Grace Archbishop Taché wrote as follows:—

"It must be freely admitted that the half-breeds of the North-West have a claim to favorable consideration. Great uneasiness is felt by them in consequence of no steps having yet been taken in their behalf. A liberal policy on the part of the Government would attract to its side a moral and physical power which in the present critical relations of the various tribes of Indians towards each other and towards the Government, would prove of the greatest value to the Dominion. On the other hand the half-breed element if dissatisfied would form a standing menace to the peace and prosperity of the Territories. There is no doubt that the state of affairs in the Territories in relation to the Indians and half-breeds, is calling for the serious consideration of the Government, and measures should be adopted to cultivate and maintain relations with the half-breed population calculated to attract them to us." * * * * *

"The half-breeds are a highly sensitive race; they keenly resent injury or insult, and daily complain on that point. In fact they are daily humiliated with regard to their origin by the way they are spoken of, not only in newspapers, but also in official and semi-official documents."

Mr. GIROUARD. What is the date of that?

Mr. LAURIER. January, 1879. Then, at the same time, the archbishop suggested a plan to the Government. He suggested that a certain tract of land be apportioned to them. He goes on to say:

"All the half-breeds, men, women and children, residing in the North-West on the 1st January, 1879, ought to receive two non-negotiable scrips for 80 acres of land each, to be located by them in one of the twelve above-mentioned reserves, said lands to be neither sold, mortgaged nor taxed until they should have passed through the hands of at least the third generation of those who receive them or of their representatives."