

"the territories. The half-breeds, who have in some respects the advantages over new settlers in the territories should be impressed with the necessity of settling down in particular localities, and directing their energies towards pastoral or agricultural pursuits, in which case lands would no doubt be assigned to them in the same way as to white settlers, but beyond this they must not look to the Government for any special assistance in their farming operations." (Laughter.) Now, gentlemen, that was the principle laid down by Mr. Mills as that which should govern the action of the administration in dealing with the half-breeds of the Northwest. I will not discuss here whether it was not a wise principle, but I think I may very fairly, as dealing with the charges which are now made against the Conservative administration, assume it, at any rate for the purpose of the argument which I am about to present to you, as at least a reasonable principle of action to be followed in dealing with the half-breeds of the Northwest. This was the principle adopted by the Grit Government, and it was adopted in opposition to the recommendation of the chief executive officer of the government in the Northwest. These people asked for seed to plant, that they might have the result of the planting in the harvest which they looked forward to. The Hon. Mr. Laird, the lieutenant-governor appointed by the Mackenzie Government of the N. W. territories, wrote to Mr. Mills on this subject, recommending the prayer of the petition: "With respect to the prayer for assistance to procure seeds and implements to commence farming operations, it is similar to the request made to you by the half-breeds of Bow River during the Blackfeet treaty negotiations and which I forwarded to you and commended to the favorable consideration of the Government." So that you will see the

DECISION ARRIVED AT BY MR. MILLS,

and which I have quoted to you from his own pen, was arrived at in spite of the recommendation of his own officer, Mr. Laird, who commended the petition of the half-breeds to the favorable consideration of the Government. (Hear, hear.) Those half-breed claims I have referred to were the earlier applications that were made. However, since Sir John Macdonald came into office, only in relation to the matter of surveys, and the matter of lands in extinguishment of the Indian title,

has there been a demand made on behalf of the Metis to the Government. Now, how have the Government dealt with those two subjects? In the first place, Mr. Pearce, who is one of the most efficient officers we have in the Northwest, a gentleman who was employed in the survey branch of the Department of the Interior during the time that Mr. Mills was in office, was summoned to Ottawa in December of last year because he was supposed to be familiar with the whole system of surveying in the Northwest, for the purpose of arranging with the Government as to what should be done in view of the course the half-breeds who had settled on more lands after survey, within the previous two years, wished to have pursued. Mr. Pearce came down here and had a conference with my respected predecessor, Sir David Macpherson. And here let me say to you, gentlemen, after careful inquiry into the Department of the Interior, after a careful study during the short time I have been in office of what has been done, that no more conscientious minister than Sir David Macpherson ever was at the head of a department. (Applause.) At that conference with Sir David Macpherson Mr. Pearce and he discussed the whole question, and instructions were sent to the agent, reaching him on the 4th of February last year, to arrange the question of surveys, so far as they still remained to be arranged, in accordance with the wishes of the half-breeds. (Applause.) I am treating of matters for which, not being in office, I am not personally responsible except as to that technical and constitutional responsibility which rests upon every minister who accepts office in a Government for the acts of the Government of which he becomes a member. But I think you will see that the Conservative Government, in dealing with the matter of surveys, at the time went very far indeed from dealing with it on the principle laid down by Mr. Mills, that the half-breeds should be

TREATED LIKE THE WHITE SETTLERS

and without any more consideration. Actually on the fourth of February last, the half-breeds, who having settled after survey had no claim to demand a change in the manner of survey, had the information from the Government that their lands would be surveyed in the manner they desired them to be surveyed, and that this difficulty would be removed from them altogether. That was some weeks before the shots were fired at Duck Lake which