

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. If in this case we had only one signature affixed to a document of this kind, I would agree with the remarks of the member for West Durham, because, although we have full confidence in our officers, we should always guard against wrongdoing. It is no insult or injury to an officer to take necessary precautions, because they are not taken against the men individually, but they are taken to minimise the temptations to which any man may be subjected. In this case there is the guarantee of three signatures, the signatures of parties who are not in the same Department, and it can scarcely be supposed that three officers in three different Departments, all of high positions, will combine to issue false patents. The Dominion notes are not signed by the Finance Minister, but by two officers; nevertheless, we do not suppose there is danger, though there might be a combination formed. I repeat that if there was only one signature to a patent it should be that of a responsible Minister; but in this case there are the signatures of three officers—the deputy Governor, appointed by the Governor General, an officer who must occupy a high position, the Under Secretary of State or some other officer appointed by the Governor General in Council; then you have the signature of the Registrar General, or the officer acting as such, who is to register this document, which is another guarantee; then the Great Seal is to be affixed by the officer who has the keeping of that instrument. With these guarantees, I think we can safely allow this new machinery to go into play.

Mr. BLAKE. As to the signature of the Registrar General, that is nothing; it is merely to authenticate the fact that the document has been registered. As to the signature of the deputy Governor General, I have no doubt the hon. gentleman advises the Governor General to appoint respectable civil servants, and I have no doubt they will not advise His Excellency to recommend by a Message that an extra sum be paid for this duty. It will be an extra duty, and we know how extra duties are performed. It will be a purely formal matter; he will not investigate it at all, and, therefore, you may wipe out the signature of the deputy Governor General, so far as that is concerned. Now, since you are abandoning legal departmental supervision altogether, and at the same time making these other provisions, there should be one or other of the two official signatures below the Minister's—the Secretary of State or the Department of Indian Affairs; it should be signed by one responsible Minister. If the Under Secretary of State signs, then the Superintendent General ought to sign; if the deputy Superintendent General signs, then it ought to be the Secretary of State, so that we may have some one to whom to really look, politically, for the proper conduct of the office. The hon. gentleman says another provision takes place with reference to Dominion notes. Well, most of the Dominion notes are for comparatively insignificant amounts; the number of them is very large, and probably the difficulty of the responsible Minister making so many signatures would be very great. Balancing conveniences, it may have been thought wise that no greater precaution should be taken as to them than has been taken, though if the newspapers tell us truly, there are some counterfeit two's out at this moment. However that may be, I think it is a very different thing providing for the issue of patents to Dominion lands, which may be of very great value in one instrument, and of which, after all, not a great many will be signed by the Department of Indian Affairs, in the course of a year, and the issue of Dominion notes.

Mr. MILLS. The hon. gentleman knows that the number of patents issued by the Indian Department is small; very few are issued during the year. The area of land at the disposal of the Indian Department is very little, and there is no reason, so far as I can see, why the Superinten-

dent General should not always sign the patent. I venture to say that at no period in the history of this country has there ever been one thousand patents issued from the Indian Department in one year, and that being the case, there is no reason why the signature of the Superintendent General should not be attached. With regard to the Department of Justice, there is certainly as much danger of irregularity in the issue of patents from the Indian Department, as in no other way could the patent come under the supervision of the Department of Justice, and the signature of some official of that Department be attached. I think we ought always to have the signature of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to patents with reference to Indian lands, and there would be no delay if that provision was required.

Bill reported.

SUPPLY—EXTINGUISHMENT OF THE INDIAN TITLE.

Mr. McLELAN moved that the House again resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. LAURIER. Before you leave the Chair, I desire to call the attention of the House to the neglect by the Government of the grievances of the half-breeds in the North-West Territories. The subject is a vast one; indeed it is so vast that I think it better not to bring under one single heading all the different grievances from which the half-breeds suffered, all the different derelictions of duty of which the Government, in my judgment, have been guilty, but to confine myself to a single one—the extinguishment of the Indian title, in so far as the half-breeds are concerned. And in bringing this matter to the attention of the House I could have wished that the Government had brought down the information which was to be laid before the House, according to promises often made and often repeated, but not yet fulfilled. The Government and their organs have told us time and again that the Government were in possession of information and evidence which, when it was placed before the House, would show them to be perfectly blameless. Yet, strange to say, by a strange contradiction, owing, I suppose, to the modesty or the sense of dignity of the Government, they have so far kept under a bushel the light which would have placed their conduct in a color so different from what it is now. The next time the Government should not stand on their dignity or their modesty to such an extent. If they have any evidence, it is time they brought it to the House; if they have any defence to make, it is time they should make it. But without anticipating at all the other subjects which may come up afterwards for discussion, without anticipating the other grievances from which the half-breeds have suffered, in so far as the grievance of which I now complain is concerned, I venture to say without fear of successful contradiction that the record will show the Government to be guilty, and to be guilty without a single extenuating circumstance, without a single shadow of excuse. It has always been the policy of England, ever since she has had establishments in North America, to compensate the Indians for the dispossession of their lands. England, and all other Christian nations who planted colonies on this continent, always felt that it was not contrary to moral law to take possession, and even forcible possession, of territories which were roamed over rather than possessed by savage nations—territories which in their hands must forever have remained barren and unproductive, but which under civilised rule would afford homes and happiness to teeming millions. It has always been held as a doctrine of international law that when such territories were discovered, the discovering nation had paramount authority therein; at the same time