

of September, 1882, A. G. Irvine, Commissioner, wrote to the present Minister of the Interior the following letter :—

“ NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE,

“ HEADQUARTERS, FORT WALSH, 23rd Sept., 1882.

“ SIR,—I have the honour to enclose herewith copy of a telegram sent this day to the department. The messages from the Indians, as regards their annuity and reservation, I promised to send to you and the department. A reply thereto the Indians now await. I have also to inform you that on my return from Qu'Appelle, I found some 2,000 Indians here. They are all in a starving and wretched condition for the want of clothing.

“ The Indians say this is their country, and they intend to remain here. They ask that they receive aid by the issue of provisions. Will you be good enough to impart to me in the form of instructions what your wishes are? In the present starving condition of the Indians, I fear if no food is given them that they may hereafter commit depredations which will bring them into collision with the force. Of course, in case of any depredations the offenders must and will be arrested and punished. It is always possible that such punishment might be accompanied with bloodshed.

“ The actual power of the Indians nowhere, in view of future hostility, is certainly not great. But, as it is superfluous to point out to you, an outbreak of any kind would be disastrous and create universal alarm throughout the country.

“ As you will observe from my telegram, the supplies of your department will not last more than three weeks; even for that time the issues will have to be made sparingly.

“ I trust you will be good enough to reply to this by return of mail.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

(Sd.) “ A. G. IRVINE,  
“ Commissioner.

“ To Hon. E. DEWDNEY, Commissioner, Battleford.”

Now, one would think a letter like that from an official in the North-West Territories would receive prompt attention. Nothing of the kind. The Indian Commissioner paid no attention to it. There were two thousand starving Indians almost at his door, and he paid no attention to them. Then, on the 2nd of October, Mr. Frank Norman, of the North-West Mounted Police, communicated with the Indian Commissioner at Winnipeg in the following words :—

“ FORT WALSH, N. W. T., 2nd October, 1882.

“ SIR,—I have the honour to enclose herewith a statement showing the amount of provisions issued to Indians at this post, and also the amount of provisions in store here on the 30th September just past.

“ These issues have not been made on my own responsibility, but by orders I have received from the officer commanding the post and of Lieutenant Colonel A. G. Irvine, Commissioner of the Police.

“ No regular issue of rations has been made, the amount of provision issued being barely sufficient to sustain life. There are at present three hundred lodges of Cree Indians camped here: these lodges average about eight souls, making a total of 2,400 souls. They are in an utter state of destitution, and are merely existing in a semi-state of starvation.

“ You will perceive that were a regular issue to be made those Indians, that the supply on hand of flour would last about to the end of present month, and that of meat, about twenty days.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

(Sd.) “ FRANK NORMAN,  
“ Inspector N.W.M.P.,  
“ Acting Agent *pro. tem.*

“ To the Indian Commissioner,  
“ Winnipeg, Manitoba.”

Now, Sir, there is a letter on the 2nd of October, and you would think that the second communication from the officials in the North-West Territories in charge of the Indians would be promptly answered. But it was not, and so, on the 19th of

October, Mr. Fred. White telegraphed the present Minister of the Interior as follows :—

“ WALSH, N.W.T., October 19, 1882.

“ To Honourable E. DEWDNEY.

“ Over two thousand Indians here almost naked and on verge of starvation; have been among them for two days; am satisfied many will perish unless early assistance rendered. Please instruct Agent McDonald to come here at once to make payment. I will arrange to have money here in readiness.

(Sd.) “ FRED. WHITE.”

Now, one would think that would arouse the Department of Indian Affairs from its slumber, but no attention was paid to it. These communications were not even reported to the head office at Ottawa until about three months after they were sent to the Commissioner. These Indians in September were dying of starvation; in October they were dying of starvation; and in the end of October they were still dying of starvation, and no assistance was given by the Government, and no step was taken by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to draw the attention of the head of the department to the condition of the Indians. Therefore, on the 1st of February, 1883, Mr. Frank Norman communicated again with the Commissioner :

“ FORT WALSH, 1st February, 1883.

“ SIR,—I have the honour to enclose a memorandum I am in receipt of from Surgeon Robert Miller of this place, with reference to the condition of the Indians.

“ I have informed Surgeon Robert Miller that it is not in my power to increase the quantity of food to the Indians, as my instructions from the Indian Commissioner are to keep the Indians at Fort Walsh on ‘starvation allowance.’

“ Your obedient servant,

(Sd.) “ FRANK NORMAN,

“ Inspector N.W.M.P.,  
“ Acting Agent.

“ E. T. GALT, Esq.,

“ Assistant Indian Commissioner,  
“ Winnipeg.”

The instructions from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the present Minister of the Interior, were to keep the Indians in a state of starvation. While Parliament was voting an immense sum, while the people were being taxed to make good the enormous subventions from year to year, to feed and clothe the Indians, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs gave instructions to keep them in a state of semi-starvation, and they were so kept. Was I not more than justified in charging the Government with cruelty and neglect in their administration of Indian affairs? At last the hon. gentleman did come to their relief. On the 24th of February, he sent the following telegram to Mr. Norman, whose despatch I have already read :—

“ Yours of February 1st received (not a word about the September and October letters). Increase rations supply slightly. Purchase two hundred pounds tea, fifty pounds tobacco, and distribute judiciously and where most needed.

(Sd.) “ E. DEWDNEY.”

2,400 Indians dying of starvation, and almost frozen to death, and the pangs of starvation are appeased by two hundred pounds of tea and fifty pounds of tobacco. Was I not more than right in making these charges of maladministration and misconduct against hon. gentlemen opposite and their officials? Yet I am answered by the statement that the extracts I quoted from the report are deliberate falsehoods and forgeries, and that, too, by the hon. Minister of Justice, who ought to have known better. I quoted further what Mr. McColl, the Indian Inspector of Agencies, said :