

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I have had a considerable amount of correspondence in connection with matters under dispute on the Blood Indian reserve. It would appear that the department was unfortunate in one or two of the agents appointed, but I am informed that the recent appointment of an agent will tend to remedy many of the complaints made by the Indians on this reserve.

Mr. MEIGHEN: My hon. friend refers to appointments made, when?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Last fall, I understand.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Before that, I think.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I may be giving a wrong impression, but my understanding was that the difficulty was owing largely to the action of the local agent.

Mr. MEIGHEN: That is, an agent some time ago.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Yes. However, I intend to make it my business this year, as soon as the session is over, to visit as many of the Indian reserves as I can, possibly a few in each province. I confess that outside of a knowledge of the Indians of the northern portion of Alberta, their educational and hospital institutions, I know very little about Indian affairs generally; and one can get a very much better idea of the conditions if he visits the reserves. He may then form an opinion as to the best method of dealing with this question.

The matter raised by the hon. member for Brant (Mr. Good), is in connection with difficulty on the Six Nations reserve. This difficulty, which is one of long standing, may be attributed primarily to the fact that a great many members of the band do not consider themselves wards of the Government, but, rather, allies of Great Britain. There was also some difficulty about military service during the war; a large proportion of the band were opposed to any members of the band enlisting, and that opposition they expressed most vigorously. I would not have time to go into all the details of the difficulties existing in connection with this band; but out of the incident of the war appears to have arisen a state of affairs that is most unpleasant. During last season the reserve was visited by a hail-storm; conditions of drought prevailed, and there was a crop shortage. Many Indians on the

reserve who had been obtaining employment at fairly remunerative wages found themselves out of work last winter, and a considerable amount of distress was occasioned. That, perhaps, along with other matters in dispute, led the council to make a demand on the government for a cash distribution of the capital funds of the band to the extent of \$20 per head. But this we found it impossible to do. The accumulated band funds are held in trust for the general purposes of the band; under the Indian Act they may be distributed for various purposes, but this is not one of the purposes. If any such distribution were made, therefore, the authority of Parliament would have to be obtained. In addition, owing to the unfortunate circumstances of last year, the Indians found themselves in many cases in need of seed. The government offered to meet all cases of distress that were approved by the agent in charge—and there have been no complaints, so far as the representations of the council are concerned, with respect to the agent in charge. The department agreed to provide the necessary seed and to ask for an appropriation from Parliament for the purpose of doing so. This did not meet with the approval of the council; indeed, it was refused, and a peremptory demand made that consideration be given to their request for the distribution of \$20 per head. We have not deemed it wise to accede to that demand; we have stood by our offer to give relief where relief was needed and to issue seed to those who found it necessary to obtain it from the department.

There is another difficulty that has now become very serious. Of the soldiers, six hundred in number, who enlisted from the Six Nation Indians, about 80 applied to the Soldier Settlement Board to be placed upon the land under the provisions of the Soldier Settlement Act. In one case an Indian named Hill obtained an allotment. Bear in mind that if there is any transaction in Indian lands it is with regard to improvements only; the ownership of the land is in the band itself, not in any particular individual. This man Hill was not prepared to go upon the land where he had met the requirements of the board and the money had been granted to him. A relative of his was in the meantime to take possession and hold the land until he was ready to go upon it. In all other cases, so far as I am aware, the men entered immediately into possession and pro-