

Mr. Oliver there says that "no progress has been made." You, Mr. McBride, a few days ago stated in the House that in the efforts made to deal with the Indian reserves not much progress has been made. In our judgment it is impossible that progress should be made until these fundamental matters have been dealt with. It seems to us that there is one underlying question, namely, whether the Indians have any rights. It seems also to us that while it is of great importance from the Indian point of view to have that question in some way determined, it is of equal importance from the white man's point of view to have it determined.

We, today suggest to you that there are two alternative plans by which this question can be determined. You can deal with it by conveying all the reserves to the Dominion Government for the benefit of the Indians or you can deal with it by consenting to the reference which has been so much discussed.

The second step which we ask you to consider is to amend Sections 5 and 34 of the Land Act by which, as they now stand, the Indians are prevented from purchasing land except by securing an Order-in-Council. In other words these men, whose ancestors owned the whole country, cannot take their good money and purchase land from the Crown without first begging for leave to do so. We understand that in not more than five instances has such leave been granted.

*Mr. McBride:* In my opinion it would be very unwise to give to the Indians such an unrestricted right as you propose.

*Mr. O'Meara:* Perhaps some safeguards might be found advisable, but we suggest that in some reasonable way this opportunity of advance should be given to the progressive Indians.

It will be well for me, before sitting down, to guard carefully against a possible misunderstanding. We are not for one moment taking upon ourselves to say that if you should decide upon these two steps, that action would settle all matters. On the contrary, a number of other matters would still remain. It would be necessary that these should be the subject of consideration and negotiation.