

This letter was dated the 16th of April, and on the 24th of April the Department replied as follows:—

"I am in receipt of your letter of the 16th inst., also of an extract from a letter received from your Winnipeg house, which, in accordance with your request, I return, the same having reference to the implements called for by the schedules accompanying the forms of tender for this Department. I also enclose copy of my telegram addressed to you, at your request, informing you that the articles to be delivered must be strictly in accordance with the specifications contained in the schedules. I regret exceedingly that the Department cannot see its way to comply with the suggestion contained in your letter. I may say, in passing, however, that the only article of American manufacture called for by the tenders is the 'John Deer' plough, and the reason for this will be explained in this letter. From the experience gained by this Department in inviting tenders for agricultural implements, and from the manner in which the contracts have been fulfilled during the past five years, it has been found that the term 'equal to' is entirely too vague to describe accurately the implements required, and to insure the delivery of suitable articles.

"Such a description is also little or no guide whatever to the Indian agents who receive over the goods in the Territories, as these men are not experts in such matters, and it is impossible for them to say whether the implement is or is not 'equal to' the articles mentioned in the contract. You are aware that all manufacturers of machines consider their own manufactures the best, and without an actual trial it is difficult even for an expert to judge as to the relative qualities of such goods. Much more difficult is it, therefore, for persons as inexperienced in such matters as Indian agents usually are to do so. The result has been, that many of the articles left, although declared by the contractors to be equal to the sample mentioned in the schedules, when used were found to be quite inferior. It was then, however, too late to remedy matters, as the articles had been taken over by the officers of the Department. The Department has, therefore, in its own protection, been obliged to specify patterns, and the names of the makers of the implements required, to avoid these serious complications, and to leave the agents of the Department without excuse in taking over goods. There is also, in addition to the above, much inconvenience experienced when implements of so many different patterns are supplied, as it is difficult, when parts of an implement become worn out or defective, always readily to obtain the necessary parts to make it again complete, and many of the implements have therefore to be discarded. The Department has, out of the multifarious articles of which it has made trial under the old system, selected those which experience has shown to be best adapted to the country, and these patterns have been adhered to, as far as possible; and where, as has sometimes been the case, it has been found that in some particulars none of those formerly sent in gave entire satisfaction, after due enquiry from practical men, other makers' patterns have been chosen. With reference to the Spaight waggon, referred to in your letter, it was adopted by the Department in the first instance. It was found that, although branded Spaight waggon, they were not complete, according to the specification embodied in the schedules, and were in many respects an inferior waggon. For these reasons a change was this year made, and the Chatham waggon selected, as it was reported to be a serviceable vehicle by persons who had had experience of the use of them in the North-West. Not only were these waggons well made, but they have given every satisfaction to those who have had them. With regard to the mowers, the Toronto mower has given the best satisfaction to the Department, and therefore there can be no reason for changing it for another, it not being desirable to have different patterns of the same machine in use, for the reasons above stated, viz., that when renewal parts are required confusion is caused. The same remark applies to the reapers and horse-rakes called for by the Department. With regard to the harrows, Collard's flexible iron harrow was adopted three years ago by the Department. It has given great satisfaction, and there is, therefore, no reason to change the pattern. As regards ploughs, the John Deer plough has been found to be the most durable, and the best implement of the kind for use in the North-West. Wilkinson's plough was tried, and was proved to be a failure. One of them, for instance, was put to work on a small farm of about 10 acres, attached to the industrial school at Battleford. It worked well for a short time, but the mould-board and point both proved soft in temper. It was, therefore, considered better to adhere to the plough that had proved satisfactory, viz., the John Deer. Since the Department commenced farming operations among the Indians in 1878-79, it has endeavored to introduce at various times Canadian manufactured ploughs. They were received on the contracts of 1881 and 1881-82, but they proved entire failures, and had to be thrown aside as useless. I may state that, in 1882, Mr. Watson, of Ayr, Ontario, who is a large manufacturer of agricultural implements, in a communication to the Indian Commissioner for the North-West, stated that no Canadian make of plough had, up to that time, given satisfaction for prairie work, and that for his trade he intended furnishing American ploughs. Trusting that these explanations will prove satisfactory to you, etc."

That is the reply made by the Department, and to that again the firm replied, on 26th April, two days after the date of the letter which I have read:

"SIR,—We are in receipt of your communication of the 24th of April, which is by no means a satisfactory reply to our enquiries. From your letter it is evident that the heads of Departments at Ottawa know as little about the agricultural implement trade as the Indian agents in the North-West are represented to know. On examination of the schedules  
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we find that the articles required by the Department are: 1 mower, 2 reapers, 2 horse-rakes, 8 waggons, 44 harrows, and 147 ploughs. Omitting the ploughs and harrows, the order is very small indeed, very much smaller than hundreds of orders which we have filled. You will, therefore, understand that the objections we make are not from any anxiety to procure the order, which, at best, amounts to very little; but we are writing you as much for the sake of showing that the Department is doing a very unfair thing, and are not carrying out the policy of the present Government. It would be very easy indeed to make a point against the Government on the floor of the House by a reference to the very matter about which we now write. We have evidence, however, that if your Department is made to understand the position fully, anything that is now wrong will be corrected. If the Indian Department require only 1 mower, 2 reapers and 2 horse-rakes, and these must positively be those made by the Massey Manufacturing Company of Toronto, why don't you give them the order, and not advertise for tenders, when it is a matter of impossibility for anybody else but the Massey Company to tender for the goods required? This same remark applies to waggons. If the Department want 8 Chatham waggons, why don't they order them from the Chatham Manufacturing Company, instead of asking tenders from parties whose waggons would not be accepted? This same remark refers to the harrows and ploughs. The order for the former should be given to the manufacturer in Gananoque, and the order for the latter to Messrs. Westbrook & Fairchild, of Winnipeg. It is entirely useless to go to the expense of advertising for tenders of these articles when they cannot be procured, except from one manufacturer in each line, and he can charge the Department any price he chooses. Apart altogether from this, for your Department to ask for tenders as they do, and stipulate for certain goods, only makes other manufacturers incensed to think that their goods should be excluded. The mowers, reapers and horse-rakes made by the Massey Manufacturing Company are good articles, and we have nothing to say against the Department for desiring to order them. At the same time, there are many other similar articles made in Canada quite as good, and which would give equal satisfaction to the Department. In regard to waggons, how the Department ever came to choose such a waggon is beyond our comprehension. It is evident that it has been done from reasons otherwise than the merit of the waggon. The Chatham waggon has only been manufactured for two seasons, and it will be five years before it is known whether it is a good article or not. It has not stood the test of time, nor is it as good a waggon as either the Spaight, the Snowball, the Adams, the Lowrie, the Ramsay, or the Bain. Nearly all these waggons have been in the market longer, are better known and are better goods than the Chatham waggon. In regard to ploughs, in 1880, 1881 and 1882, American-made John Deer plough was the best plough in the North-West, and at that time Mr. John Watson, of Ayr, was bringing American ploughs, as we were also ourselves. Does the Indian Department think that Canadian manufacturers have been sitting on stools, doing nothing, during the last four or five years? For the information of the Department, we may say that immense progress has been made during the last few years in the manufacture of ploughs for the North-West, and to-day the ploughs made by Geo. Wilkinson & Company, of Aurora, or by the Cookswell Plough Company, of Brantford, or by the American Plough Company, of Ayr, of which John Weston is president, are just as good as the American-made John Deer plough, and are very much more largely sold in the North-West Territories. We give these facts for the information of the Department, and again say that it is a very unfair thing for the Department to call for tenders in the manner in which it has. We give herewith a memorandum of Canadian names, which are, in every respect, equal to the goods asked for in the schedule of the Indian Department, and in getting out the schedules in future, if tenders are desired, the option should be given of supplying the goods we mention."

And then they specify the names of certain mowers and reapers and self-binders and waggons, and other manufactures, and go on in this way:

"All or any of these goods are equal to the goods asked for in the schedule of the Indian Department, and very many of them are much superior to the goods asked for. We know that the Department will absolve us from ulterior motives in writing as we do, because the goods that we could supply would be very limited indeed; but we do not like to see inconsistency in anybody, much less in any Department of the Government of our country."

I do think there should have been some attention paid to the representations made some two years ago by that correspondent. I have given all weight to the arguments which have been supplied by the Department in their replies, but it does seem to me that, when there are a mower and two reapers required, and you specify that they should be bought from certain manufacturers, the Government should buy from them, and should not send out forms of tenders, in a manner which is equivalent to giving the Government sanction and proclamation that in their experience these articles are exclusively made by those firms. In agricultural implements there has been great improvements, and many firms are bending their best energies to