

of time. More than that: we provided that the grant should not interfere with the rights of others to obtain limits in the same district before the lots were selected, and we provided no lot would be granted less than twenty miles, so that where there were small areas of timber, three or four miles in extent, they had to be taken as twenty-mile lots before they could be obtained; we did this to preserve the small areas for the use of the settlers. I do not propose to say more on that subject. The hon. gentleman has referred to staked claims and to delays in the distribution of some of the half-breed grants in Manitoba. Let me say that the greater portion of those were distributed in 1877; and we find, when this Government came in, that further distribution was not made until 1881. He charged the late Government with dilatoriness in issuing patents. Hon. gentlemen opposite, no doubt, issued more than were issued in our day, as there was a larger population in the country. Besides, when we were in office, three years were required before a patent could be issued to homestead lands, and it is perfectly clear that until the population was in the country for some time no patent could be issued. It was only those who were the original settlers of the country, the few who went in at the beginning of our administration, who were entitled to the patents at all. I need say no more on that subject. The hon. gentleman has referred, in great detail, as others have who spoke before him on that side, to the administration of affairs by us; but that is not the question which is before the House at this moment. What we have to consider is the conduct of the present Administration, and not that of the Government which retired from office seven years ago. It is important we should look with some care into the conduct of affairs in the North-West, and it is my purpose to bring under the attention of the House some of the grievances of the white settlers of Manitoba and the North-West, with a view to a more efficient administration of our public lands, and the prevention of further abuses. One of the most important functions of the House of Commons is to exercise a careful supervision over the administration of public affairs, so as to secure honest and prompt action, and so as to prevent a public Department being subordinated to the interest of the camp followers of a party. This, in a great and distant region like the North-West, is all the more necessary, because the settlers are without representatives on the floor of Parliament, and cannot, in the ordinary constitutional way, complain of any wrong which may have been done them. It would not be improper for me to briefly refer to the history of our attempts at colonisation in the North-West. With the acquisition of that country we began a new departure. Until then, we were ordinary colonies, possessed, it is true, of a constitutional system of government, similar in principle to that of the parent State; but with the acquisition of the North-West we set out on a new venture—we began, ourselves, the work of establishing colonies. The extension of the frontier settlements in the older colonies, was a work which proceeded without the interference of Government. All that was needed was that surveys should be made, the country set out for settlement, and a land office opened. But the acquisition of the North-West imposed upon us duties of a somewhat different character. It is true that no difficult problems were involved. It only required ordinary prudence and industry on the part of Ministers to have made the business of settling the North-West in the highest degree successful. We had no new problem to solve—we had the experience of England and of the United States before us. The Territories which, in 1869, were annexed to the Dominion, were Territories out of which all believed Provinces in time would be carved; that what was to-day a colony, must soon become a Province, incorporated into the federal family, and represented on the floor of Parliament. We had before us the plan of

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the neighboring Republic. We saw how, for nearly a century, it had surveyed and set out for settlement its Territories. How it gave to the settlers of these Territories local self-government; and how, when the Territories had acquired a certain population, they were formed into States and admitted as members of the Union. We saw before us Crown colonies growing up into constitutionally governed Provinces. There was no difficulty in our way. There was no new question presenting itself for solution. Every political problem with which we were called upon to deal had already been solved. All that we needed was honesty of purpose and industry to do the work of to-day at the proper time, and not to defer until some more convenient season what ought at once to be undertaken. When we acquired the North-West Territories there was already a population of eight or ten thousand whites and half-breeds. These had been, for many years, under the jurisdiction of the Hudson Bay Company and their officers. They had been ruled with a niggardly hand. No Government could well have done less for a people than the Hudson Bay Company did for the dwellers in the Red River district. They had no love for the company's rule; they knew enough about representative institutions to know that they enjoyed fewer of the political rights of British freemen than any other people in the British North American dominions. They furnished a splendid nucleus with which to begin a loyal and contented colony; but the course adopted towards them was so unwise that, before the Canadian Government succeeded in establishing its authority in the country, it had made an enemy of nearly every man in the country. The Hudson Bay Company had there a governor, a council, and a judicial officer, none of whom were consulted with reference to the future government of the country. There was not a leading man among the settlers who was treated with more consideration. The hon. member for Jacques Cartier says we did not find men in the North-West to put in the North-West council. But how was the first Government of Manitoba constituted, in 1869? The entire population were ignored. A system of arbitrary government was provided. No provision was made in the Act providing for the government of the settlement, for the election, by the people, of a single representative to the council. A Governor was appointed; a law officer was named; other parties were promised positions on the council; but not one of them was a resident of the country. If they had been a conquered population they could not have been more arbitrarily dealt with. Whatever could offend the susceptibilities of a free people was done. It is true they owed the Hudson Bay Company little. They had not enjoyed elective institutions under the régime of the company, but if their government was arbitrary, it was a government by men taken from among themselves, while the new Government established by Canada was one wholly from without. What they had seen of the Canadians was well calculated to excite alarm. The surveys, when begun, were upon a plan which so completely ignored the plan of settlement that it was not surprising that the population everywhere believed what they were told, that their occupation of the country and their improvements were not of a kind that could give them any claim to the lands of which they were in possession. They found the constituted authorities of the country scarcely less discontented than themselves, and it was not surprising that alarm and resentment culminated in rebellion and in bloodshed. I remember seeing a letter, which had been addressed by Sir Stafford Northcote to Governor McTavish, shortly after the terms of surrender had been agreed upon, in which he informed the Governor of what had been done; and he went on to say that those who had directed the affairs of the settlement under the company would continue to share in its government after the transfer was made. What a disappointment it must