

free people, I speak my mind when I say that this assembly is not worthy of the great duties imposed upon it.

It being Six o'clock, the Speaker left the Chair.

After Recess.

Mr. LAURIER. I stated to the House this afternoon that on the 4th March I had moved for the Report of the Half-breed Commission, and that up to a recent date the Order of the House which was then issued had not been complied with. The motion which was then granted by the House ordered the Government to bring down all reports made by the commissioners appointed under the royal commission, all proceedings of the said commissioners, all instructions given to them, and all correspondence exchanged between them and the Government. So far this Order has not been complied with. It is true that in the report of the Minister of the Interior, subsequently laid before the House, there is a garbled report of the commission. This report upon its face is garbled; it shows that the most important and material parts have been omitted. Now, Mr. Speaker, upon a question of this importance, it will strike everybody that it is not sufficient to have truth, but we must have the whole truth. It was not sufficient for the Government to communicate to the House only such parts of the report as suited them. It was their duty to bring the whole of it, whether it was to their advantage or their disadvantage. But while the Government chose to bring only such parts as they deem fit, some hon. members of the House on the other side have been more fortunate than we on this side generally are. On the same day on which I moved for the report to which I have just referred, the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Ross), moved for:

"Return showing the number of half-breeds of the North-West Territories who proved their claims before the commission at Fort Qu'Appelle, Touchwood Hills, Qu'Appelle Valley, Regina, Maple Creek, Calgary, Fort Macleod, Pincher Creek, Edmonton, St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Victoria, Fort Pitt, Battleford, Prince Albert, Batoche, Duck Lake, Forks of Saskatchewan, Fort à la Corne, Cumberland House, Moose Jaw and Willow Branch, in North-West Territories; also at Grand Rapids in Keewatin, and Winnipeg and Griswold in Manitoba, giving in each case the number of heads of families and minors; also the number of males and females; also copies of all the petitions filed in the Department of the Interior praying that grievances be redressed, with the names of such petitioners, distinguishing those who had their claims already settled in Manitoba and those who had not; also the number of Manitoba half-breeds who proved their claims prior to the 20th of April last on the supplementary list, and those who have proved their claims since that date."

On the 24th of March, just twenty days after this Order had issued, the return asked for by the hon. member for Lisgar was brought down. It was not voluminous or bulky, but it showed that its preparation had entailed a great deal of labor. It selected ten different petitions, which had been presented by half-breeds at different periods; it went over the names of the petitioners, one by one, and classified them under three different headings—one, the half-breeds who had participated in the Manitoba grant; second, the half-breeds who were to receive scrip from the commissioners; and third, the half-breeds who had not proved their claims. This return showed on its face not only that it had entailed a good deal of labor, but that it was manifestly prepared just to suit the event. It was not a copy of existing documents; it was a careful compilation, prepared with an object. What was the object of the compilation? The object was to show that the great majority of those who had signed those petitions had participated in the grant in Manitoba, and that the claims they were now preferring were fraudulent claims. Such was the object contemplated, and such was the result as set forth in the ministerial press. On the day after this return was brought down, the *Mail* newspaper contained the following article:—

Mr. LAURIER.

"It appears from a return presented by the Minister of the Interior that of thirty-one half-breeds of the Lake Qu'Appelle district who petitioned the Government in 1874 for land, sixteen had received scrip or land in Manitoba, six did not prove their claims, and nine received scrip certificates from the commission appointed last year.

"Of 147 residents of the Prince Albert settlement, thirty-six had obtained their scrip in Manitoba, seventy-one did not prove their claims, and forty received scrip from the commission.

"There were 276 half-breeds living in the vicinity of the Cypress Hills who petitioned, and of these 101 had obtained their scrip in Manitoba, 161 did not prove their claims, and fourteen obtained scrip from the commission.

"Of seventeen settlers at Manitoba village who petitioned, five had obtained their scrip in Manitoba, four did not prove their claims, and eight received their scrip from the commission.

"Of 115 settlers at Fort Qu'Appelle who petitioned, fifty-seven had received scrip in Manitoba, fourteen did not prove their claims and forty-four obtained scrip from the commission.

"In September, 1882, Gabriel Dumont and 45 others, mostly French half-breeds, settled on the west bank of the Saskatchewan, in the Prince Albert district, petitioned the Government, and of those 36 had obtained scrip in Manitoba and 10 did not prove their claims.

"From St. Louis de Langevin a petition was presented, signed by 32 half-breeds, and of these 24 had obtained their scrip in Manitoba and eight did not prove their claims.

"Another petition from Fort Qu'Appelle bore 44 signatures, and of these persons 30 had obtained scrip in Manitoba, three did not prove their claims, and eleven obtained scrip from the commission.

"The rising, it will be remembered, was confined to the half-breeds of St. Laurent and St. Louis de Langevin, of whom 78 had petitioned the Government for scrip under the Act of 1879, and of these no less than 60 had obtained their scrip in Manitoba, and were entitled to nothing, and could legally receive no other treatment than that accorded other settlers in the North-West."

Now, you see the innuendo of this article. It is not set down in so many words, but the inference is that the majority of those who signed the petitions had already received scrip in Manitoba, and were again applying for scrip, and thus trying to obtain an unfair advantage over the Government. This is a most foul slander. I denounce it as a slander on the half-breeds, in trying to convey the impression that they were dishonest in petitioning for rights to which they were not entitled. Unfortunately they had more grievances than one. They had the grievance, not only that they were not fairly treated with regard to the extinguishment of the Indian title, but also the greater grievance in relation to the surveys. Not one of their petitions can bear the purport the *Mail* puts upon it. Take the first statement of the *Mail*. It said that of the thirty-one half-breeds of Qu'Appelle who petitioned, sixteen had received scrip for land in Manitoba, nine had received scrip from the commission, and six had not proved their claims. You would deduct from that statement that the thirty-one half-breeds of Lake Qu'Appelle who had petitioned the Government had been asking again for scrip for the extinguishment of the Indian title, when they had already received scrip for that purpose. Let the House refer to the petition which is to be found at page 7 of the blue book. What do they ask for? They asked to be allowed to keep the lands they were in possession of; they asked for certain rights for fishing and hunting; they asked for the participation of the Roman Catholic mission in all the rights of the half-breeds; they asked for regulations for the hunting of buffalo and for the establishment of some authority to administer the affairs of the country. There is no demand for the extinction of the Indian title, and therefore the impression the *Mail* seeks to convey is a slander on those people. Let us take the other petitions to which the *Mail* referred. There is the petition of George McKay and others, settlers and residents of Prince Albert, numbering 147. What do they ask? They ask first for surveys; next, that the surveys be made according to their present holdings, with narrow frontages; and third, that the half-breeds who have not participated in the Manitoba distributions should receive the same consideration as was granted the half-breeds in Manitoba. Let us take the fourth petition. Of these petitioners, the *Mail* says: Forty received scrip from the commission, thirty-six had received scrip in Manitoba, and seventy-one had not proved their claims. Let us take the fourth petition,