

and powers assumed under its Charter; and they imputed to it one continued policy of the grossest injustice and oppression, both towards British subjects generally, and the native Indian tribes. Their representations were sustained, and their cause most ably advocated by Mr. A. K. Isbister, one of the delegates. On the other side the chief champion of the Company was Sir J. H. Pelly, its Governor, who maintained the perfect legality of the powers claimed and exercised by it; met the accusations against it either with flat denial or justification; and contended that it had used its privileges most beneficially, with regard both to the people under its sway, British Half-breed and Indian, and to the nation generally.

The question as to the legality of the Company's Charter was referred by Earl Grey to the law officers of the Crown, Sir John Jervis and Sir John Romilly. These gentlemen, on an *ex parte* case, drawn up on behalf of the Company, reported in favour of its claims under the Charter; but the statement submitted to them involved very little of the real question between the Company and the Red River Settlers, and they were so little satisfied as to the legality of the powers known to be *exercised* by the Company, that they recommended that the questions submitted to them should be referred to a "competent tribunal for consideration and decision," suggesting either the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, or the Committee of Trade. Well might they entertain the doubt implied in this recommendation, for quite as eminent legal authorities as they, viz: Sir Arthur Pigott, Sergeant Spankie, and Lord Brougham, had given a most elaborate opinion, declaring the Charter to have been illegal in its origin, and even if legal, subsequently voided by the violation of all its conditions.

As to the charges against the Company, Earl Grey seems to have been in a state of considerable bewilderment. He wrote two dispatches to Lord Elgin, Governor General of Canada, directing an investigation into them. In his reply, dated June 6th, 1848, (Parliamentary Paper 227, sess. 1849, p.p., 8—9.) Lord Elgin describes the difficulties he experienced "in obtaining materials for a full and satisfactory report;"—states that the result of the inquiries he had made was "highly favourable to the Company;"