

encouraged to raise their own food ; but the change in their habits cannot be effected in a day. The provisions supplied them are so distributed as to encourage industry. Men who absolutely refuse to work are certainly not encouraged in their idleness. They are taught by practical lessons that their comfort will best be secured by efforts on their own part. It is necessary to teach them that lesson ; for if they once acquire the notion that it is the duty of the Government to maintain them they will never attempt to do anything for themselves. But in this effort to encourage them to become self-supporting the Government is placed between two fires of hostile criticism. On the one hand it is charged with wasting the public money in feeding a lot of idle vagabonds. On the other hand, if it stints the rations of the lazy and the thriftless, it is charged with starving the poor Indians. The intentions of the Government in this particular were expressed by Sir John Macdonald in his first report as Superintendent General of Indian affairs (dated April, 1879) as follows :

The rapid disappearance of the buffalo, which is the staple article of food of the Indians and halfbreeds of the North-west territories, induces the belief that these people must in a few years be fed at the expense of the country unless they in the meantime acquire some other means of subsistence than the buffalo hunt now affords. In order to enable them to become self-supporting as soon as possible, facilities must be provided by which they may acquire some practical knowledge of agriculture and of the care of stock. They will probably require some small supply of provisions each year while engaged in tilling and sowing their lands. Such assistance, however, should only be extended to those Indians who prove to be in earnest in endeavoring to become self-supporting.

It cannot be denied—it never has been denied—that occasional cases of injustice to the Indians have occurred. While men are fallible and subject to human infirmity they will fall into errors of judgment and lapses from duty. In spite of the utmost vigilance cases have come to the knowledge of the Government calling for regret and for reproof. These occurrences are not peculiar to the present administration. They took place under the Mackenzie Government, and will no doubt continue after the present Government