

sible for them to subsist. The Commission was appointed, with the consent of the Government of British Columbia, to enquire into the matter, to take into consideration the grievances of the Indians, and to make such allotments as was proper. The papers will show that, in many instances, where the Indians have their burying grounds, and in other instances where they had made improvements for themselves, the whites had rented the land from the Indians in order to get possession, and they were no sooner in occupation than they applied to the Government as occupants of public lands, and obtained preemption rights to those lands, thus practising a fraud on the Indians. In some instances these lands have been taken from these parties and restored to the Indians, who had been unfairly deprived of them. My opinion is, that the Commission, which was appointed with the view of settling these disputes, has gone a long way to allay the fear and ill-will in the minds of the Indians in British Columbia, and that the three Commissioners, in the first instance, and Mr. Sproat, up to the time I left office, performed his duties in a very satisfactory manner. I think it is extremely desirable that the Government, after making the Indians dependents and wards, should exercise the utmost vigilance in protecting their rights and preparing them for emancipation, otherwise more serious complications will grow up there. It is perfectly obvious that many who have gone into that country do not regard the Indians as having any rights to the occupation of the lands; and unless the Government stand by the Indians a very small measure of justice is likely to be meted out them.

MR. DECOSMOS: The hon. gentleman has made a charge against the people of British Columbia.

MR. MILLS: I have made no charge. I have simply stated some facts.

MR. DECOSMOS: He said the people who went there had no regard for the rights of the Indian. I will say this: That up to the time of Confederation, we had no trouble with our Indians at all. Occasionally, an Indian depredation was committed, but it was soon suppressed. Our whole cost for the management of Indian affairs was only

from \$500 to \$1,000 per annum; but from the false policy of dealing with the Indians adopted by the late Government, the expenses now amount to \$50,000 a year. After Confederation all the Dominion Government was expected to do under the Terms of Union was to deal as liberally with the Indians as before Confederation. So far as the rights of the Indians are concerned, the entire feeling of all classes in British Columbia has been to give the Indian, no matter when or where, all the land he could utilise, and treat him upon an equality with the white man. It was to the interest of the white settler that that should be done, and it has been done invariably. It is a mistaken policy on the part of the Canadian Government to make Indians a privileged class, in regard to the ownership of land. The Indian should have been taught to earn his living the same as a white man. The manner in which Indians have been dealt with, both on the American side of the international boundary as well as on this side, cannot but be regarded practically as fraud perpetrated in the name of right, if I read rightly the manner in which they were dispossessed of their lands. The Indians were told that they were the original and rightful owners of the lands over which they roamed and hunted, and of the rivers and lakes in which they fished. The whites wanted their land; they knew its great and increasing value; they offered them presents and annuities and reserves, bearing no proportion hardly to its real and prospective value. The Indians were induced to surrender their so-called title, and the white man became the possessor of their inheritance. The white man then boasted of his successful and profitable bargain with the Indian tribes, who were ignorant of the real and future value of the lands they had parted with. The Indians were treated similarly to a child who surrendered a valuable jewel for a showy bauble or toy. The proper way—the just way—ought to have been to ignore the so-called Indian title. The Indian should have been told that the white man had as good a right to share with them in the possession of the lands as they had. That his right to hold all he could use would be respected, but his so-called title to land that he had not made and never could use,