

enumeration made by Messrs. Machar and Ryan, the actual number of half-breed children entitled to share in the 1,400,000 acres was grossly underestimated; but with all its errors, the Government preferred the work of their own incompetent enumerators, performed in the most perfunctory manner, some six years after the date of the transfer, to the carefully compiled census made under the direction of Mr. Archibald, immediately after the transfer, and when the opportunities of ascertaining the facts must necessarily have been better than they were at the time of the investigation made by Messrs. Ryan and Machar. The actual number of claims enumerated by Ryan and Machar was 5,088; the Dominion lands agent, on the 10th August, 1876, reported 226 more; and the Minister of the Interior at the time jumped to the conclusion, upon what grounds no one can tell, that about 500 more half-breeds would probably be entitled to share in the allotment. So, with a largeness of heart unparalleled in their dealings with the half-breeds of Manitoba or any other section of the people of Canada, the Government decided that they would give to each half-breed child entitled to share in the reserve a free patent for 240 acres. This might look like liberality to the half-breeds, but if we take a peep behind the screen we find that before that date, apparently despairing of ever receiving patents for their lands, the majority of the claimants had disposed of their rights for a mere song, to speculative friends of the Government; and it was no doubt for the benefit of cormorants of this class that the hearts of Mr. Laird and his colleagues so suddenly expanded. If proof were wanted of this, it is easily to be found in the manner in which the work of apportioning the land amongst the rightful claimants was afterwards proceeded with. Not a solitary allotment upon this new and liberal basis was made until March, 1877, and when the present Government returned to office, in 1878, they found that the half-breeds of St. Boniface, St. Norbert, St. François Xavier, Baie St. Paul, and St. Agathe, containing more than one-half of the half-breed population, amongst whom the reserved lands were to be distributed, had not only not received their patents, but the allotments had not even been made. And thus, Mr. Speaker, you see that the Government of that day, who, if they had taken the census of Mr. Archibald, would have found full and ample indemnity and compensation for the rights, real or supposed, of the half-breeds of Manitoba, cut them down one-half, handed over 240 acres, instead of the 150 or the 190, to the white speculators, their friends, who had bought these claims. And now, what do we find? We find that the difference between the 5,000 and the 10,000 are now on the plains, and now they are claiming the amounts which those hon. gentlemen deprived them of when they were in the Government. They are now claiming the land, and they find an advocate in the hon. member for Durham (Mr. Blake). They claim the lands which they ought to have got long ago—not to such an extent, certainly, but to a reasonable extent, if the Government of that time had accepted the census taken under Mr. Archibald, instead of cutting it down one half, in order to double the value to their own friends of that day. But, Sir, to speak a little more of the conduct of the Government of that day, let me call the attention of the House for a moment to the conduct of the Minister, through his own officer, Mr. Ryan. Mr. Ryan was one of the commissioners appointed to enquire into these claims. He got his commission extended, in order to get on the plains, in order to ascertain what the claims of those men were, who, from one reason or another, had not been present to assert those claims. Well, Sir, Mr. Ryan telegraphed or wrote to the Department, to ask for leave to enquire into the claims of the people there. He asked for leave to go round on circuit and settle with those people. What did the hon. gentleman say? He said: You shall do nothing of the kind. He said, as was stated in the paper which was partially read by

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD.

the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Ryan was originally appointed with Mr. Machar. He afterwards had his commission extended, and he was told to go to the applicants and see what could be done. Mr. Ryan, among many other telegrams, sent the following:—

“28th June, 1878.—Half-breeds pressing me. Will time of investigation be extended.”

Mr. Laird telegraphed from Battleford:

“24th June, 1878.—Observe Mr. Ryan's authority; investigate half-breeds' claims under order 14th June, 1876, lapsed; recommend time be extended one year; he is now here; applicants waiting answer.”

He was refused that time; the enquiry was never made—

Mr. MILLS. The hon. gentleman knows that Mr. Ryan's time was extended, and that Mr. Duff was appointed.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. And in a letter, dated Dominion Land Office, Winnipeg, 16th March, 1877. Mr. Codd, the agent of Dominion lands, writes to the Surveyor General:

“I have the honor to submit for your consideration the enclosed communication from Mr. Police Magistrate Ryan, not considering that the matter is one coming properly within the sphere of my official duty. Without offering, therefore, a recommendation in the matter, permit to remark that it seems to me to be no part of the duties of the Government to compel, so to speak, the half-breeds to prove their claims.”

That is Mr. Codd's advice. Written across the face of that letter, in the handwriting of the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), the Minister of the Interior, at that time, are these words:

“It is not necessary to look up parties who have claims. If they care for their interests, they themselves will come forward and establish their claims.”

Thus it was, Sir, that the whole of the claims and rights of these people were ignored by the Government before we came in. It was stated that they had no greater claims than the whites, and I am not at all sure that the hon. gentleman was not right in his logic; but, at the same time, if that be so, I cannot understand the long indictment which the hon. gentleman has delivered against the successors of the Government of which he was a member. Now, Sir, the question was one of very great difficulty. As I have already stated, the settlement in Manitoba and for Manitoba was for that Province alone. There were very few half-breeds outside of the boundaries of the Province of Manitoba. Whether they had claims, or whether they had not claims, it was necessary that peace should be restored; it was necessary that a Government should be established; it was necessary that the new Province of Manitoba should be organised; and therefore this grant of 1,400,000 acres was made to the half-breeds having possessory rights along the Assiniboine and the Red Rivers. Outside of those cases, the question was altogether open, as the hon. gentleman's despatch shows. Now, the half-breeds must be considered either as white men or as Indians. A great many of them chose to be considered as Indians, to go to the bands of their brothers to enjoy all the advantages of the treaties, to get their annuities, their supplies, and the presents that were given to them. Others said: No; we are white men; we will be considered as white men; we will have the right of white men; and if so, they had the same rights as other white men living outside of the Province of Manitoba, who had settled before the 15th of July, 1870. Now, Sir, these rights have never been denied to them. Not one half-breed has ever been dispossessed of his land. Not one white settler who was in that country at any time before we acquired it, has ever been dispossessed of his lands. Not one act of depression has been announced by the hon. gentleman; no man has come to him and said I have lost my land, I have lost my patrimony, I have lost my house. No man has said he is not in the same complete and happy and undisturbed possession of his land as he