

West Council; we complied with their wishes and in so far as it was in the power of the Government to deal with the half-breed population, prior to our retirement from office, it was done. Now, if hon. gentlemen will look at the petitions from those half-breeds, which the Government have brought down to the House, they will get some idea of the maturity of the half-breeds question for settlement outside of Manitoba, by the date of these petitions. The first petition sent in is that from Blackfoot Crossing, 19th September, 1877. It is a petition, not asking for a distribution of lands similar to that in Manitoba, but asking for aid in the way of seed grain and agricultural implements. Then there is a petition from the people of St. Albert, on the 10th of April, 1878. There was a petition of the half-breeds of St. Laurent on the 1st of February, 1878. These petitions were acknowledged immediately after the close of Parliament, on the 17th of May, 1878. Then there was the petition of the half-breeds at Cypress Hills on the 13th of September, 1878, and there was the resolution of the North-West Council of the 2nd of August, 1878. There was a petition of the half-breeds at Edmonton, on the 19th of May, 1880; of the half-breeds of Qu'Appelle, on the 20th of September, 1881; of the half-breeds of St. Antoine de Padoue, on the 4th of September, 1882; and of St. Louis de Langevin, of the 18th of September, 1883. So that hon. gentlemen will see that these people became interested in the question of the distribution of land amongst their children and the security of their homesteads just about the time that the Government of Mr. Mackenzie was retiring from office. The first of these petitions reached us, it will be seen, during the Session of 1878. It was not possible for us to propose legislation at that time. We had not the necessary information. If we had been prepared to deal with the half-breed population upon precisely the same line that they had been dealt with in the Province of Manitoba, we might have done so; but I did not think that the results of the distribution of the land amongst the half-breeds of Manitoba had been so satisfactory that it was desirable to follow exactly the same lines. In my opinion a better course might have been adopted. In my opinion the Government had ample time to adopt that better course, and the fact remains that they adopted no course, that they neither pursued the system which had been followed in Manitoba, nor did they seek a more satisfactory conclusion of the half-breed claims during their Administration. It was not until the rebellion took place that hon. gentlemen took any serious steps to settle this half-breed question. The Minister of the Interior has undertaken to show that the half-breeds and the friends of the half-breeds were dissatisfied with the Government of Mr. Mackenzie, and the hon. gentleman read here a private communication—I do not know how it came into his possession—from Rev. Father Lacombe to the Hon. Mr. Pelletier. Now, I will say with regard to that communication, that I have no recollection of ever having seen it. It may have been sent to the Department, to my secretary, for the purpose of being read by me. It may not have been, by some negligence on my part, returned to Mr. Pelletier. The hon. gentleman did not say how it came into his possession.

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). Do you deny its existence?

Mr. MILLS. I do not deny its existence. The hon. gentleman may have purloined it for all I know. But I will say this, that I never had any communication with Archbishop Taché, by letter at all events, except one communication that I caused to be addressed to him in regard to the purchase of the rights of the half-breeds to those 1,400,000 acres, shortly after I came into office. I will say further, that I think Father Lacombe was appointed by me one of the commissioners in 1877, for the purpose of dealing with the Indians under Treaty No. 7, and if that reverend gentle

man was at all dissatisfied with the course the Government pursued, certainly I did not know it, unless it might be from that communication, if the communication ever came under my notice, unless indeed in the matter of the stake claims, upon which the advice of the law officers of the Crown was altogether against their validity. Now, I think I have shown that the Government of Mr. Mackenzie did deal with the half-breed population of Manitoba. We did make the distribution of the lands of that half-breed population. There are a few parishes in which the lands were not distributed until after we retired from office; but it was because of certain disputes that rendered that impossible. But all that was done was done from 1877 to September or October, 1878, by that Government; and I have pointed out that we were taking the necessary steps for the settlement of the half-breed claims in the North-West Territories. But, Sir, supposing we had been negligent in our duty in dealing with the half-breed population of the North-West Territories, and supposing the question was ripe for settlement in 1878, would not that be all the greater evidence of negligence on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite in not having dealt with the question immediately after their entrance upon office? These hon. gentlemen succeeded us on the Treasury benches, because the public were disposed to trust them rather than us with the administration of public affairs; and if we were negligent in not settling this question between 1874 and 1878, what is to be said of those hon. gentleman, who have been in office for seven years since, and until a rebellion broke out, did not take the first steps for the purpose of securing a settlement of the half-breed question?

Mr. DAWSON. A general impression seems to prevail throughout the country that the half-breeds of the North-West in the locality where the rebellion occurred were the natives of that locality. Now, it has been very clearly explained by the Minister of the Interior that they were not natives of that locality, but that they were mere immigrants who had gone to that section from another part of the country. The number of settlers who were natives there was exceedingly limited, and the great majority of the half-breeds on the South Saskatchewan at the time of the rebellion were immigrants from other sections. Some of them were 800 miles westward from the place of their birth, they were seeking new lands, and there they settled; they were almost as far west of their native place as the country they originally came from is west from this place. This fact is not kept prominently enough in view. Sir, a great many causes have been assigned for the rebellion; but there is one which I think has been very little dwelt upon, and which would have caused trouble under any circumstances; that is, that two different races of people, utterly unacquainted with each other's habits of living, were brought into contact. When the white settlers went into that country first they were not acquainted with the habits of the Indians of the plains or the half-breeds; neither were the Mounted Police when they first went into the country. These half-breeds had been for many generations accustomed to hunt over the plains wherever they chose; they were frequently at war with their neighbors, the Sioux Indians, and they led an unrestrained life which generated a spirit of freedom among them; so that, when the white men came there, after this country acquired possession of the North-West, they felt that a certain restraint was to be put upon them. They saw that they could not spread out their herds of cattle wherever they chose, and hunt the buffalo at will over the plains as they formerly did, and a spirit of discontent naturally arose among them, which under the most careful administration might have resulted in trouble. This view of the matter has been very little taken into account. One side of this House throwing blame on the other, and neither