

men opposite take when they had charge of the interests of the Indians, and, as my hon. friend from Edmonton said to-day, were charged with the duty of looking after the very last cent of the very last Indian in order that justice should be done to them? I would like to ask my hon. friends what interest they appeared to take in the matter when this same question was being dealt with in the city of Victoria? It was probably by reason of the arrangement then made with hon. gentlemen opposite that the Attorney General of British Columbia has presumed to deal with the matter as he has without its being taken up by an official of the Department of Indian Affairs. Let me read to the House a telegram dated October 26, 1910, and addressed to the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister, Ottawa:

Have sent following telegram to Interior: Have made agreement with chief and representatives of Songhee Indians by which Indians agree to remove from reserve on following terms: Province to pay \$10,000 to each head of family, forty-three in all. Province to supply new reserve and to pay all expenses of moving tribal effects and deed to new reserve. New reserve to be selected by myself and five members of the tribe. This arrangement is made subject to confirmation of the Dominion Government. I would respectfully urge that Dominion Government give its consent to such settlement of this question. I trust that this request may receive favourable consideration by your Government.

(Sgd.) Richard McBride.

To which Sir Richard McBride received the following reply:

Hon. Richard McBride, Premier, Victoria. Ottawa, October 28, 1910.

Have consulted with Minister of Interior and any arrangement satisfactory to Indians will be quite acceptable to us. Would only suggest that as we are the guardians of Indians it would be advisable that department be party to arrangement and that same be made under Indian Act. We intend introducing legislation this session in connection with similar questions.

(Sgd.) Wilfrid Laurier.

I have no complaints against the hon. gentlemen in connection with their dealings in this matter at that particular time. They evidently had confidence in Sir Richard McBride's Government, that they would not undertake to do an injustice to the Indians in the Songhees reserve or any other part of British Columbia. They gave evidence of that confidence by the answer sent by my right hon. friend at that time. Let me say that we too have confidence in Sir Richard McBride and in his Government, that they will deal fairly with the Indians in the matter now before this House. At the same time the Department of the Interior have not given this proposed surrender any consideration officially

and, as I stated in my opening remarks, according to the judgment of Mr. Newcombe, this is a matter that will come before the commission which we have appointed. It will be for them to decide upon it and it will be only when they have decided upon it as I understand the case, that the Department of Indian Affairs will take it up and give it consideration.

Mr. HUGH GUTHRIE (South Wellington): I think the object of the hon. member for Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) in bringing this matter to the attention of the House to-day was a most laudable one. If I understand the matter aright his object was to bring most distinctly and most positively and directly to the attention of the Government notice of negotiations which are now pending or proceedings which are now being taken between the Government of British Columbia and the Indians of that province who are the wards of the Government of the Dominion of Canada for the surrender of certain very valuable property rights held by the Dominion of Canada for the benefit of the Indians of British Columbia. An agreement has been closed between the province of British Columbia and the Indians but I assume that there would be nothing final in that agreement until the consent of this Government or the proper officers of this Government shall have been obtained. That consent, I understand from the Prime Minister, has not yet been given and the matter has not yet been dealt with by the Government of Canada, notwithstanding what may have transpired between the province of British Columbia and the Indians of that province. The hon. member for Edmonton is actuated by a desire to give the Government positive notice of what is going on and I think he is acting wisely in the course he has taken. So much has been done by the present Administration, so much has come to light during the present session of a questionable character, and so much has been excused by the ministers opposite upon the sole ground that they did not know and had no notice, that I think it high time that someone in the House should give positive, actual notice of transactions of this kind when taking place in any part of Canada. It is only within the past few days that we had an excuse from the Minister of Marine and Fisheries that he appointed to office a man who turned out to be a criminal, because he did not know the facts. I think the day afterwards the Minister of Finance, who last summer acted as Minister of Justice, excused the release from the penitentiary of the same man, Landry, upon the ground that he did not know, he had no notice. Within a week or ten days the Minister of Public Works attempted to justify or to excuse.