

any right or title of the Indians, or grant them reserves large enough for their subsistence. So much dissatisfaction was created among the Indians, that there was a confederacy between the Indians of British Columbia and Washington Territory, which, had it not been for the success of the United States troops against Chief Joseph, that Indian confederacy would probably have involved the whole of that Province in civil war. Mr. Sproat, the Commissioner in British Columbia at that time, recognizing the critical condition of things, was disposed, as far as possible, to meet the wishes of the Indians. I think they did so fairly, and without giving the Indians reserves unnecessarily large. But within the limits of some of those reserves the local Government had already granted patents to private parties. There are some instances in which the parties had come into possession and have either leased the land of the Indians or agreed to work them on shares. Now, according to the local land regulations, a squatter could certify to the facts in such a case, at the land office and get a certificate upon which a patent might ultimately issue, and there have been, I believe, two or three instances in which patents were issued to parties in the very centre of the Indian reservations. I would like to know from the hon. gentleman whether, in such cases, the patents have been cancelled and the lands surrendered to the Indians.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. They have not, so far as I am advised. The hon. gentleman has very accurately defined the difference between the status in which Canada found the Indians in British Columbia at the time of the Union with that Province, and the status of the Indians in the other Provinces. In Ontario, at all events the Indian title was recognized and treaties were made by which the Indians surrendered their titles before the Crown opened the land for settlement. I think that was a fair mode of treatment. The Indians are the aborigines—the original occupants of the country, and certainly their rights should be respected. These rights were not recognized at all, in the same sense in British Columbia as in Ontario. In the first place, when the Hudson Bay Company held the promise under license from the Imperial Crown, they acted with respect to the Indians of British Columbia, as they acted with respect to the Indians elsewhere, and when it became a Crown colony the same system was carried out. The Indian title was never formally recognized by the Government, though I believe they were very fairly treated as a rule. Still no treaty has been made with them and no surrender of the lands took place. The arrangements made by the late Government were, I think very proper, in the way of having reservations marked out by the Commissioners; and as I understand it, the Commissioners always consulted with the Indians and obtained their assent to the restrictions as being sufficient for their purposes. Arrangements were also made so as to enable the remainder of the country outside which were in the possession of Indian bands, to be opened for settlement. I do not at all say that the decisions of Mr. Sproat, or of the three Commissioners, were erroneous, in the way of being too liberal to the Indians. My feeling would be, as I think the feeling of the hon. member for Bothwell would be, on the side of the Indians, and in the direction of seeing that they had "ample room and verge enough" for all their wants. I would be slow to acquiesce in any alteration of a reservation deliberately set apart by the Commissioner for a band, on the ground that it was excessive. There might be mistakes, of course, and they might be corrected, but in all such cases I think the Indians should be consulted, and should be reconciled to any alterations in the bounds which they have been informed are the bounds of their several reservations. I am strongly of the opinion that if the Government raised the question of the Indian title, the Courts of this country and the Courts of England, at all events, would maintain

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the right of the Indians and their title to the occupation of the soil until that right whatever it might amount to was extinguished. And as the Government is the guardian of the Indians, if it was found that the Government of British Columbia was acting unjustly with the Indians—which I do not, by any means, expect—or depriving them of their reasonable rights, we might in such an event be obliged to assert the rights of the Indians to a recognition of their titles to the lands.

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Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. With regard to the item of annuities there has been a decrease of \$14,166. As the hon. gentleman is aware the practice is that when an Indian is absent for say three years, he does not receive his arrears of annuity when he comes back. He received the annuity for the year in which he returned and the arrears for one year, and the next year he received the annuity for two years. This plan was followed for two reasons: first, to avoid unexpected demands upon the appropriation; and, secondly, to avoid overloading the Indians with money which would be wanted. It is calculated that \$6,000 will be saved in that way. Then we expected to save at least \$8,166 by a system of checking by tickets which we follow, for the purpose of preventing the Indians from being paid more than once. It has been found that while, on the whole the Indians have been honest, they sometimes cannot resist the temptation when they move from one agency to another of endeavoring to get paid twice.

Mr. MILLS. I do not think the hon. gentleman has acted quite fairly to the House in submitting this vote in its present form. I find, on referring to the Estimates for 1878, that there are thirty distinct items in place of the one we find here. It is impossible to know how this money is to be distributed. We might almost as well vote the entire Estimates in one sum, as to vote this sum of upwards of \$500,000 in the way proposed. In the Estimates for 1878-79 and in all previous years we have a distinct vote for each Indian treaty. For Treaty No. 2, we voted \$27,000; No. 3, \$15,640; No. 5, \$15,560; these votes were for the superintendency of Manitoba. In the superintendency of the North-West Territories we had distinct votes for the Treaties Nos. 4, 6, 7. Then again, with regard to the expenses of those superintendencies, with regard to the amount to be expended for provision, for freight, and with regard to all various payments that were contemplated, each of them were estimated for, and the House was informed of the amount required. The hon. gentleman proposes to take \$202,025 for annuities, and we are left in the dark as to how this sum is to be distributed, and it is only by looking at estimates of former years that we can form any opinion of it. I do not think the hon. gentleman has been successful in preventing frauds. That system of checks has always been in force in reference to the North-West Indians. My opinion is that frauds were practised to a moderate extent in the beginning and they have gone on increasing from year to year. The hon. gentleman has, no doubt, looked at the report of the Inspector. I find in that report that there have been many cases where the Indians appeared at three or four different places and received pay. An Indian appears as a member of a particular band, and he is paid, but instead of returning to his lodgings again he hastens away to the next point of payment, under some other agent, where he presents himself and is paid again. I have looked over the statistics, and I think I can show the hon. gentleman that frauds of this sort have been practised. They have been practised to a limited extent in the Treaties Nos. 1, 2 and 3, because the number of Indians who have appeared, from time to time, each year, is pretty much the same. Yet even in these treaties frauds have been practised. If the hon. gentleman will look at the number of Indians, for instance, in Treaty No. 6, presenting themselves for annuities, he will see that