

and others. I think, however, he is incorrect in the proposition in which he complained of the want of independent opinion in this country—I presume he meant amongst members of Parliament—which he contrasted unfavorably with the independence of members in Great Britain. It seemed to me that the remark was not very *apropos*, in view of the position of affairs in this country. Within the last few months there has been an exceedingly widespread—in one province at all events—expression of independent opinion. Had he borne that in mind, he would hardly have complained of the want of independent feeling, or of the want of independent expression of it in this country; but, I think, with reference to all the provinces, and to members of Parliament generally, there is a very adequate expression of independent opinion. Government and Opposition are so affected by what they learn to be the feeling of those who support them that it guides, so to speak, the course of both. I do not think our public men contrast unfavorably with those of England—with those whom my hon. friend quotes as having taken an independent stand in regard to certain public matters in Great Britain.

Neither is the hon. gentleman's criticism correct, I venture to think, with regard to the Indians. He thinks that the discontent of the Indians is due to their intercourse with white men. In one sense this may be the case, but not because of their treatment at the hands of the Government, and the agents of the Government. I fancy that the discontent of the Indians has arisen not from ill-treatment by the Government or agents of the Government, but from other causes, and particularly from the extinction of the buffalo. Nothing appeals to a man's feelings, or arouses his discontent more than a want of food. In the years gone by when the Indians referred to by my hon. friend as being contented and peaceable under the good and wise rule of the Hudson Bay Company, a different condition of affairs existed. The Hudson Bay Company are entitled to infinite credit for their management of and system of dealing with the Indians in that country, and I have frequently taken occasion from my place in this House to pay my humble tribute to them

in that respect; but neither they nor any other power controlling the Indians could have provided against what has happened in the North-West in the last few years, as the result of opening up that country to settlement. When the immense supply of buffalo was cut off, there was a good deal of want and starvation amongst the Indians which naturally produced discontent. No matter how well they were treated by the agents of the Government; and no matter whether they were or were not subject to ill-treatment by white men, it was impossible to maintain content if they were on the verge of starvation. Now, with reference to their present position, since the supply of buffalo has failed, the Government have taken every means, I think, which reason would dictate, or which the finances of the country could afford, to supply the wants of the Indians and to keep them from starvation. Great pains has been taken, great care has been exercised, and large sums of money have been expended for the purpose; and I believe I am safe in saying that there has not been any starvation amongst the Indians, notwithstanding the statement which has been made to-day. It has been made again and again; we have heard it within the last five or six weeks, and the Government were so startled by the news that special pains were taken to find out whether the statement was accurate or not. Men connected with the service of the Government in the North-West, on whom we could thoroughly depend, were sent amongst the various tribes to ascertain whether the statements were correct, and returns reached us by letter and by telegram that they were not. Of course, Indians do not live as white men do, and when an agent says there is no starvation among them, he means literally that their wants are reasonably supplied, having reference to their mode of living. That is the return that was sent us by the various Indian agents employed during the last two months. The incident I speak of occurred a couple of months ago, during Sir John Macdonald's absence in England. The agents employed were reliable men in every way. I could readily mention the names; and I am sure if they were known to hon. gentlemen they would increase the impression which I desire to create by quoting their reports to the effect that