

report which I now wish to bring before you had not then been submitted, and it is confirmatory of this, showing that there must be negligence and incapacity on the part of the officials in the North-West. I desire, in as brief a manner as possible, to show how the Indians were dealt with. The first thing that I will refer to is a report of Lieutenant Colonel Irvine, dated Fort Walsh, 23rd September, 1882:

"Sir,—I have the honor to enclose herewith copy of a telegram this day sent to the Department. The messages from the Indians, as regards their annuity and reservations, I promised to send to you and the Department's reply thereto the Indians now await. I have also to inform you that on my return from Qu'Appelle, I found some 2,000 Indians here. They are all in a starving and wretched condition for want of clothing. These Indians say that this is their country and they intend to remain here. They ask that they receive aid by the issue of provisions. Will you be good enough to impart to me in the form of instructions what your wishes are? In the present starving condition of the Indians, I fear, if no food is given them, that they may hereafter commit depredations, which will bring them in collision with the force. Of course, in case of any depredations the offenders must and will be arrested and punished. It is always possible that such punishment might be accompanied with bloodshed. The actual power of the Indians now here, in view of future hostility, is certainly not great, but, as it is superfluous to point out to you, an outbreak of any kind would be disastrous and create universal alarm throughout the country. As you will observe from my telegram, the supplies of your Department will not last more than three weeks, even for that time the issues will have to be made sparingly. I trust you will be good enough to reply to this by return of mail."

Then we find another letter from the same place, Fort Walsh, of the 2nd October, from another party:

"Sir,—I have the honor to enclose herewith a statement showing the amount of provisions in store here on the 30th September, just past. These issues have not been made on my own responsibility, but by orders I have received from the officers commanding the post and of Lieutenant Colonel A. G. Irvine, Commissioner of Police. No regular issue of rations has been made, the amount of provisions issued being very barely sufficient to sustain life. There are at present 300 lodges of Indians camped here, these lodges average eight souls, making a total of about 2,000 souls. They are in an utter state of destitution, and are merely existing in a semi-starving state. You will perceive that were regular issues to be made to those Indians, the supply on hand of flour would last about to the end of the present month, and that of meat about twenty days.

"I have, &c., &c.,  
(Signed) "FRANK NORMAN."

That is from a second person discussing the same. Then on 9th October the following telegram is sent from Fort Walsh to the Hon. E. Dewdney by Mr. Fred. White:—

"Over 200 Indians here almost naked and verged on starvation. Weather cold and snow now on ground. Have been among them for two days. Am satisfied many will perish unless early assistance rendered. Please instruct agent McDonnell to come here at once to make payments. I will arrange to have money here in readiness.

"(Signed) "FRED. WHITE."

Now, here are reports with reference to the starving condition of these Indians from three different Government officers, one dated 23rd September, one 2nd October, a more pressing one 19th October. That letter of 23rd September, of Lieutenant Colonel Irvine, asks particularly that there should be answer at once, pointing out the dangers of hostility from the Indians on account of insufficiency of food. That was not answered by Mr. Dewdney until the 27th October. Over a month elapsed before any attention was paid to that. I do not find after he had answered it that anything was done to furnish supplies to these Indians. On the 1st February we find a despatch from Fort Walsh as follows:—

"I have the honor to enclose a memorandum I am in receipt of from Surgeon Robert Miller at this place, with reference to the condition of the Indians.

"I have informed Surgeon Miller that it is not in my power to increase quantity of food to the Indians, as my instructions from the Indian commissioner are to keep the Indians at Fort Walsh on starvation allowance.

"I have the honor to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
(Signed) "FRANK NORMAN."

Now, we have not got that letter of Surgeon Robert Miller, but it must have stated that that which was imminent

to the Indians five months before was upon them now, and it was undoubtedly a strong letter, so strong that Frank Norman thinks it necessary to report to the commissioner that he had not power to listen to the request of the surgeon. Now, on 25th February, as near as I can make out, the first action was taken by the commissioner in reference to the relief of the Indians. His telegram is dated from Ottawa, 26th February—the commissioner is at Ottawa. There is a pressing telegram to the commissioner from Robert Miller, dated 1st February, and it is twenty-five days after that before the commissioner gives any instructions at all, and the reason is apparent—instead of being there at the post of duty, he is here in Ottawa, what does he say?

"Yours 1st February received; increase ration supply slightly; purchase 200 pounds tea, fifty pounds tobacco and distribute judiciously and where most needed."

That was to be distributed amongst 2,000 Indians. Now, Sir, I think that reveals clearly a state of carelessness and of negligence on the part of the commissioner that deserves some explanation. Lieutenant Colonel Irvine says they are starving, that the peace of the country is in danger; Frank Norman reports the same thing a few days after, and still a stronger telegram comes from Fred. White two weeks after that; and although all these despatches were received in September and October, we find no action is taken until February. Mr. Dewdney seems to give as his reason that these Indians ought not to be at Fort Walsh, and the policy was adopted of driving them away and throwing the responsibility upon Colonel Irvine if hostilities did break out. Now, I come to the year 1884, and I am dealing with the Indians on their reserves. On 7th February we have a report by the Government medical officer, with reference to Piapot's and the Assiniboine reserves, on which the Indians are living. This medical officer reports a great deal of disease among them. I have not time to read it all, but among other things he enumerates:

"And starvation, if the last can be recorded as a disease. I find that in the last three months, thirteen deaths have taken place in each reserve, in all twenty-six, a very heavy death rate, and from all I can gather, death has been accelerated, if not immediately caused by the scant supply of food served out to these Indians. At the present time, this condition of starvation is more evident among the Assiniboines, as the Creeks have lately obtained supplies by cutting wood. I saw several children in the Assiniboine camp worn and wasted, and unless properly fed, must die in a few days. The old medicine man asked me if I could give him some medicine to have by him, that would be helpful when the Indians fainted, as from their scanty and insufficient rations, a number of them suffer in that way. It may not come within my province to report this condition of starvation, but I am well satisfied that if they were sufficiently fed, there would be less tendency to illness among them. I may also add, that from the way they have been allowed to starve, a firm determination was expressed by both Piapot and Jack, that as soon as they could travel they would forsake the reserve and go west again."

Now, I say if there be any justification for keeping the Indians on starvation allowance at Fort Walsh, because the Government did not want them there, it cannot be applied to this band located on their reserve; but they are in such a state that they threaten, as soon as they can travel, to go where they can find some food. Sir, there must be feelings in the breast of the red man when he gazes upon these children, as described by the medical officer, worn and wasted with starvation, and then compelled to remain on their reserves; and I can readily understand that there would be a feeling of great uneasiness among them when the poor old medicine man has to ask: Have you anything by you that will strengthen men who faint for the simple necessities of life? The medical officer of the Government says that it may not be in his line, perhaps, to report this, but he considers that it is essential for the keeping of the Indians on their reserve, and in the public interest that he should report it. Then, some few days after that, a letter to the superintendent follows; and it must be said, with reference to the deputy of the hon. gentleman, that when