

and Canadian voyageurs, no one but Catholic missionaries and the officials of the Hudson Bay Company had the slightest idea of its importance for agricultural purposes. The buffalo robes and furs collected by the North-West fur traders were always on hand in the markets of Montreal and London, but no one could have the slightest suspicion that the buffalo would so soon disappear before railways and civilisation. The population of the whole North-West then consisted of 1,000 white men, 33,000 or 34,000 Indians and a few settlements of half-breeds, numbering 12,000 or 13,000. There were no means of communication except the canoe, cart, traineaux, or snoc shoes. There was only one steamer, the *International*, which plied between Lake Winnipeg and a town I believe called Georgetown in Minnesota. In 1869-70, Hon. William Macdougall took 14 days to travel from St. Paul to St. Vincent, a distance travelled to-day in less than eighteen hours. In 1871, Bishop Grandin took fifty-two days to proceed to St. Albert from St. Boniface, which, as hon. members know, is opposite Winnipeg. Mail service was almost unknown. There was a monthly mail service to the outside world; but as to inland service it was almost unknown. I need not say that the laws were very simple. Property could, of course, be transferred by deeds in writing, which were recorded in the office of the Hudson Bay Company, in just about the same way as transfers of property were recorded in the Province of Quebec in the office of the seigneur, but it could also be transformed by verbal agreements. There was no registry office. There was a court of justice at Fort Garry; but so far as courts of justice in remote districts were concerned, they were unknown. I need not talk of jails; there was no necessity for them. The whole of the district was governed in a paternal manner by a Governor and council, assisted by some sub-council as at remote points, and also by the officials of the company. Most of the trade consisted of exchanging the furs of the half-breeds and of the Indians for other commodities of life which were to be found in the stores of the Hudson Bay Company. In fact the Hudson Bay Company had a monopoly of the trade up to about 1858. In all the remote settlements or posts, it could hardly be said that there was any organised Government. Major Butler, speaking of the very district where the recent rebellion took place, wrote to Governor Archibald in 1871:

"The institutions of law and order, as understood in civilised communities, are wholly unknown in the regions of the Saskatchewan, inasmuch as the country is without any executive organisation, and destitute of any means to enforce the authority of the law."

This want of authority was also felt in the most central