

the Dominion, I should judge from this answer knows—or on Monday last knew—absolutely nothing of the transaction. Now, I do not wish to delay the House in discussing this matter, but I think it is desirable that the position should be understood; that is, that the responsibility that rests upon the Government of the Dominion in regard to the land in the Indian reserves, should be understood by the House. The Indians are the wards of the Dominion Government. That is one of the obligations especially placed upon the Dominion Government, being removed directly from the Imperial Government and placed upon the Government of the Dominion—a responsibility to care for the interests of the Indians and to protect them in their rights both as to person and property. And there is no right in which the Indians require protection more completely than in the ownership of the land which has been set apart for their use and benefit. I need not dwell at length on the recognized sacredness of the trust which is thus laid upon the Government of the Dominion in regard to the rights of the Indians. The Indian cannot alienate his land, nor can he alienate his interest in the land; that alienation can only take place, under the Indian Act, by and with the consent of the Department of Indian Affairs or of the Dominion Government. That is in line with the question I asked, and the responsibility is admitted in the answer.

In this case, the reserve in question is not of large area, in fact the Indian reserves in British Columbia are generally speaking, of very small area. This reserve is of about eighty acres, and I am given to understand that it is within the corporate limits of the city of Vancouver. It is situated on the south side of False Creek within the city limits and has value as city property. And besides, I am given to understand, it has special value as offering possibilities for the location of a railway terminus. There can be no doubt that the land is valuable. It has an abnormal value. This land is, or was, occupied by some twenty families of Indians. According to our understanding of the Indian Act, that is, the understanding of the Indian Act which has prevailed since Canada was Canada, this property in the Indian reserves whatever its value is the property of the Indians who can establish their rights to them. So, whether there were twenty Indians or ten, or a hundred; or whether the property was worth \$250,000 or was worth \$1,000,000, it was their money; or it was worth \$5,000,000, it was still their money. It appears however, that this property has been purchased from the Indians individually by the British Columbia Government paying the Indians \$11,250 per

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family, the Indians agreeing to vacate the land. This is a transaction, however, it would appear from the newspapers, that has been in progress for some time. It did not transpire only on the 8th or 10th of April. Negotiations were opened, as I read in the newspapers, in regard to the transfer of this land, some time in the month of March, and early in April a meeting was held between a magistrate of the provincial Government and the Indians with the view to considering the question of the surrender of these reserves. Perhaps I had better read an extract from the Vancouver Sun of Thursday April 3:

A number of the Kitsilano tribe states that a meeting was held on Tuesday—

That is on the 1st of April—

—in the court room of magistrate H. O. Alexander between the male members of the Kitsilano tribe and Attorney General Bowser. Magistrate Alexander was present, according to the Indian informant of the Sun.

The Indians declare that there was a meeting at which Attorney General Bowser made the offer mentioned of \$11,250 per man for the reserve. The Indians indignantly refused the offer, stating that an agent of the Chicago, Milwaukee and Puget Sound railway is offering them \$50,000 per man. The eighty-six acres of the reserve are worth at least \$7,000,000.

The paper goes on to report the transaction and says:

Suddenly Interrupted.

One of the Indians replied to this offer, saying, 'Mr. Bowser and Magistrate Alexander, listen to me: If you owned some property, and one man came and said he would give you \$11,250 for it, and another man came and said he would give you \$50,000 for it, which would you take? I think it is best for us to wait a little while until the Indian land commissioners are here.'

At this the Indian was suddenly interrupted by Mr. Bowser, who is declared to have exclaimed sharply, 'When the commissioners have gone you will get nothing at all for your land, not one cent. All you will get will be a portion of land somewhere in the Squamish valley in return for the Kitsilano reserve. Now which do you prefer, \$11,250 or nothing? Here is your cheque. If you want it you can take it, and draw your money for the land, or you can leave it.'

I think it would be pertinent to inquire if Attorney General Bowser, a member of the Government of British Columbia, who undoubtedly was present at this meeting, and who undoubtedly made this offer, was acting with the authority of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Dominion, on his own initiative, or with the authority of the Government of British Columbia.

It appears that Mr. Bowser or the Government of British Columbia were not alone in the market for this reserve. The Vancouver Sun of the following day, April