

QUESTIONS.

CONTRACT WITH SASKATCHEWAN VALLEY LAND COMPANY.

Mr. FOSTER asked :

1. What was the date of the contract made by the government with the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company ?

2. Was it a condition of the contract that in each township twenty settlers should be actually placed by the company in even-numbered homesteads, and twelve settlers on odd-numbered quarter-sections sold by the company, before the company became entitled to the remaining even-numbered sections in the township, and was this condition fulfilled ?

3. Was it also a condition of the contract that two-fifths of the settlement was to be completed within two years from the date of the contract, and was this condition fulfilled ?

4. At what date were the patents issued, referred to by the Honourable Clifford Sifton, in these words, as found in 'Hansard' of 19th July, 1904: 'Patents were granted by officers of the department to the extent of something like 150,000 acres' ?

5. By what officers were these patents signed, and by whose instructions were they issued ?

6. At the time of the issue of these patents was the department in possession of any report or certificate of any duly qualified officer that the required number of settlers was actually upon the lands, or that two-fifths of the whole number required to be placed thereon by the company, were actually thereon ?

7. If so, what report or certificate, and by whom made ?

8. Had the company previously to this application made any applications for patents to any of these lands ? If so, was their application granted ? If not, why not ?

9. Has the company been obliged to take all the even sections in each township in which they made settlement and selections, as declared by Honourable Clifford Sifton, in the following words, to be found in the 'Hansard' of 19th July, 1904: 'I may say that where they take any land they will have to take the whole township' ?

10. Was any extension or change made in the area out of which the company was to make its selections, or the method of making its selections, (a) of the 250,000 acres sold it by the government; (b) of the 800,000 acres, more or less, sold it by the Qu'Appelle and Long Lake Railway Company ?

11. If so, what were they in each case ?

Hon. FRANK OLIVER (Minister of the Interior) :

1. The 24th May, 1902.

2 and 3. The conditions of the contract referred to in questions 2 and 3 are in the words of the contract as follows :

'It is agreed that the purchasers shall place twenty settlers on free homestead lands in each township, and twelve settlers on lands which may be sold by the purchasers before they shall be entitled to the remaining even-numbered sections; in other words, there shall be in each township twenty quarter-sections to be settled on by homesteaders and twelve by the company on other sections which the settler

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may purchase, to entitle the purchasers to buy from the department the balance of the even-numbered sections at the disposal of the Department of the Interior.

'It is understood that this arrangement shall extend over a period of five years, but that the purchasers shall be obliged to perform at least two-fifths of the conditions as to settlers being placed on the lands within two years from the date hereof and one-fifth each year thereafter, otherwise they shall forfeit the right to purchase and the amount of money deposited with the government as security.'

The records show that the department considered that there had been substantial fulfilment of these conditions.

4. Patents were issued to the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company or its assignees at various dates in February, March, April and May, 1904, covering some 140,000 acres of the 150,000 acres for which patents were applied for and for which payment had been made when the Honourable Clifford Sifton made the statement quoted in question 4.

5. These patents were signed by T. G. Rothwell, then Acting Deputy Minister of the Interior, the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Governor and the Registrar of Land Patents, and were issued on the authority of the Commissioner of Dominion Lands.

6 and 7. A report dated the 22nd December, 1902, was received from Mr. C. W. Speers, General Colonization Agent, from which this is an extract :

'It will thus be seen that a total of 1,642 homestead entries have been effected through the work of this Company in the district named. In my investigation of the matter I failed to find where there is one settler on the records of the Dominion Lands Office books who is not a bona fide settler and put in in good faith by this Company, so that although the settlement is very great throughout the district at present I might say that after the coming spring the entire completion of the agreement by this company with the government should be well consummated.'

8. The purchasers applied on the 8th November, 1902, for the issue of patents for about 57,000 acres of land, subject to assignment to the department as security for the fulfilment of the contract of an equal area of railway lands owned by the applicants. Authority for the issue of patents in compliance with the application was granted by an order in council of the 5th December, 1902, but such authorization was not availed of by the company; and the authority was rescinded by an order in council of the 24th March, 1903, 'upon,' to use the words of the order, 'the representation of the president of the company to the Commissioner of Dominion Lands that the company does not wish to avail itself of the right.'