

established survey, whether such person had ever been threatened, or informed, or believed that he would not be allowed to retain the land upon which he had settled, and that without exception the reply to these questions was in the negative. That, the statement having been made that certain of the settlers within the said parish of St. Louis de Langevin had been informed that, owing to the Government having sold the lands upon which they had settled to the Prince Albert Colonisation Company, their claims to these lands would not be recognised either by the Government or the said company, it was deemed advisable to investigate and find out, if possible, the origin of such report. That as many of the settlers as was possible were interrogated on the subject, and pains were taken to trace out the source from which the report had emanated. That without exception the settlers stated clearly and distinctly that no official of the Government or any colonisation company had ever made any statement to that effect. That I have read over the affidavit of Norman McKenzie, one of the settlers referred to, that he is an intelligent Scotchman, a good settler, and a man capable in every way of forming an opinion of his own. That I have also read over the statement of Marguerite Boyer, one of the declarants in the matter, that she is a half-breed widow, whose husband was killed during the recent outbreak, that her affidavit was carefully translated to her by Louis Marion, that she fully understood the same, and that the said affidavit was executed by her in my presence, in her own house, and in the presence of her family, who are conversant with the English, French and Cree languages. That I also heard read over the affidavits of the several Bouchers, Swains, Bremners, Fiddlers, and others relating to the same matter, that I was personally present at the execution of the several affidavits made by them, that I know personally each and everyone of them, that the said affidavits were carefully read over and explained to them in the language with which they were most familiar, that they fully understood the same in every particular, and that they executed such affidavits without inducement of any description whatever, but freely and voluntarily, and without coercion, or fear of coercion, on the part of any person whatever.

"And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of the Act passed in the thirty-seventh year of Her Majesty's reign, intituled: 'An Act for the suppression of voluntary and extra-judicial oaths.'

(Signed) "GEO. DUCK.

"Declared before me, at Winnipeg, in the county of Selkirk, this 27th day of April, A.D. 1886

(Signed) "H. T. CHAMPION,

"A Commissioner in B. R."

Then I have another affidavit from Mr. Marion, the half-breed who translated these statements and the questions that were asked of these people, and explained the matter to them when asked for information which they gave under oath. This is an affidavit sworn to at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, in the North-West Territories of Canada:

"I, Louis Marion, farmer, of the settlement of Duck Lake, in the electoral division of Lorne, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, do solemnly declare:—

"That I am a French half-breed, and have resided continuously at Duck Lake since 1879. That I can speak and understand thoroughly the English, French, Cree and Sautaux languages. That last December I accompanied Mr. William Pearce on his visit to the French settlements at Batoche and St. Louis de Langevin and their vicinity, and, acting as interpreter, explained thoroughly to the settlers in every case the meaning of all papers they signed for him, and that they understood the meaning of all affidavits they signed for him. That frequently I explained matters to the French half-breeds in both the Cree and French languages, and asked them whether they were sure they thoroughly understood the papers they signed, and that this was done before their signatures were appended, and also that they declared before signing any of the affidavits that they were satisfied and willing to sign the affidavits. That I never heard any of those settlers complain of being disturbed in their holdings either by the Government or by any person authorised by the Government or by any other person whatever.

"And I make this solemn declaration"

This was declared before Mr. D. H. McDowall, justice of the peace of the North-West Territories, on the 27th April, 1886. Now I think that, in the face of the affidavits, after the statement of Mr. Pearce, written on his own behalf and in his own defence, and in the face of the two affidavits I have just read of the two gentlemen who accompanied Mr. Pearce on the occasion, we may fairly consider that the charge, the very serious charge as undoubtedly it would be if it were true, made by the correspondent of the *Globe* that these half-breeds had been induced to swear to what was false under fear or threats that something would happen to them if they did not so sign, is entirely untrue. As I said on rising, I do not propose to follow the hon. gentleman in the general argument he has used. We have already had the general question of North-West management sufficiently discussed in several phases during this

Session, and I think the House, as well as the country, will realise that, whatever may have been the conduct of this Government, it does not come well from the former Minister of the Interior, the member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), to bring up a charge of this kind. I believe that the country will come to the conclusion that, although there may have been, as in the very nature of things there must have been, in the administration of a large department of this kind, with a large territory of that kind so far away from us, some mistakes, some delays, this Government have fairly, honestly and conscientiously endeavored to govern that territory in such a manner as to ensure to the prosperity of the country, and that we shall be able in a short time—and we find that a larger immigration is going into that country now than during the last two or three years, at any rate—to realise the great advantages to that country of the policy which the Government has pursued, by opening it up for settlement, by prosecuting surveys in every part of it, and opening it all, we hope, to the reasonable settlement of the people under the law which requires that the settler shall make entry of the land on which he settles within three months of the time when he settles.

Mr. LAURIER. The question involved in the motion of my hon. friend from Bothwell (Mr. Mills) is so complex that I quite realise that it is impossible to debate it thoroughly at this time of the Session, nor will I attempt to do so. As to what has been said by the Minister of the Interior, I have just this to say. The reproach which was made by my hon. friend to the present Minister was not that the Government had been too rapid in their surveys—

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). Oh, yes.

Mr. LAURIER. Oh, no. He altogether misunderstood the objection of my hon. friend. It was not that they had been too rapid in their surveys, but that they had extended their surveys over land unfit for settlement. This was the main charge he made. But the charge I make is that the present Government did not prosecute the system of special surveys upon the larger rivers, which had been inaugurated by my hon. friend when he was in charge of the Department of the Interior. This is the main charge that is brought against the Government, and against which they can offer no excuse. A special system of surveys had been introduced into the country, and it was a necessity of the settlements began by the half-breed population, and not only by these, but by all the Canadian and European settlers upon the large rivers. The hon. gentleman knows as well as I do that the system of narrow front river lots was not only adopted by the half-breeds but by all other settlers who had settled upon the Saskatchewan River; and he knows also that the system was adopted in Prince Albert, and to some extent in St. Laurent. My hon. friend, while he was in charge of the Department, introduced that system, but the present Government as soon as they came into power in 1878, revoked that system.

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). No, no.

Mr. LAURIER. I say yes. The Sessional Papers are full of petitions from the half-breeds asking that this special system which had been granted to Prince Albert and St. Laurent, should also be granted to St. Louis de Langevin.

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). I mean that the policy pursued by the Government when it came in was this: that where there were settlements which desired the system of river survey, it was carried out, but where there were no settlements, as in the case of St. Louis de Langevin, when the surveyors went there, the plan pursued in all other parts of the territory was adopted.

Mr. LAURIER. I take issue altogether with the hon. gentleman, and if I had the Sessional Papers I could show