

vested in the Crown in the right of the province of British Columbia; whereas we claim that they belong to Canada in the rights of the Crown in Canada, subject to the benefit of the Indians. That is the question which is to be examined by the commission. As to the appointment of the commission, I have no observations to make at this moment; but it seems to me that in a question of this kind, which is altogether a matter of law, it would have been far better to have had the decision of the highest court of the Empire, the Privy Council. My hon. friend from Edmonton has stated that he has endeavoured for many years past, when a member of the late Administration, to have the matter disposed of by a reference to the courts; but the House of Commons would not consent to this. They have at last succeeded in avoiding the courts and getting the matter referred to this commission, which, after all, cannot settle anything, but can only express an opinion which may be approved or disapproved by Parliament or the courts.

As I understand it, the question brought to the attention of the House by my hon. friend from Edmonton is altogether a different matter, and one with which this commission would have no power to deal. I know nothing personally of the matter. I only know what has been stated here this afternoon by my hon. friend from Edmonton. As I understand it, there is within the limits of the city of Vancouver an Indian reserve of some eighty acres. We can well understand that there is a desire on the part of the people of the city of Vancouver to have this Indian reserve removed from among them, because everybody must admit that it is a blemish on the development of the city. We have had the case of the Songhees reserve in British Columbia, and we have had others. The Indian, wherever he lives in the neighbourhood of the white man, will not improve his condition and is an impediment to the development of the portion of the country in which he happens to be. As the right hon. the Prime Minister has said, we recognize this condition, and we recognize also that the Indian has a right to be treated with the greatest care—that he must be protected even to the impediment of the white man who happens to be in his vicinity. We have made provision in the law for meeting such cases as the present one—that of the existence of an Indian reserve in a large city. We have provided means by which these Indians can be removed. There are two methods provided. One is to get the consent of the Indians themselves to the surrender of the reserve; but, if the Indians will not consent to a surrender, then an application can be made to the courts for their removal under certain conditions. In this matter, it

appears from the statement made by the hon. member for Edmonton that the surrender has been obtained from the Indians; but I understand that it has not yet been consummated, which cannot be done except with the consent of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. But there is one point to which I would call the attention of my right hon. friend upon the statement of my hon. friend from Edmonton, that is, that the surrender by the Indians of this reserve of eighty acres within the city limits of Vancouver has been obtained for the sum of \$11,000.

Mr. OLIVER: The sum of \$11,250 per family.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Yes. That is a total of something over \$200,000. Now, the sum of \$11,000 per family for twenty families for eighty acres of land within the limits of the city of Vancouver seems to me altogether inadequate. I should be extremely surprised if anybody from the West, from Vancouver particularly, were to tell me that a plot of land of eighty acres within the limits of that city would command no larger price than \$200,000. That appears to me to be a condition which ought to be investigated by the Department of Indian Affairs before the transfer is consummated. I do not understand, however, that my hon. friend from Edmonton has asked anything more to-day than that an exact statement be made of everything that has taken place in regard to this matter. It may be that everything is right; at first sight I would say that there seems to be in this matter a subject for investigation, although I would not say it absolutely. However, I think it is a very legitimate demand on the part of the hon. member for Edmonton that a complete statement of everything that has taken place in regard to this matter up to the present time should be submitted, and this request has not at all been met by the answer of my right hon. friend. Instead of furnishing the statement for which he was asked, my right hon. friend made an attack upon the hon. member for Edmonton for his action with regard to these Indians. In this I think my right hon. friend was altogether in error, and was unjust to the hon. member for Edmonton. That hon. member gave the history of the Songhees Indian reserve, and of the manner in which it was disposed of, showing what extraordinary precautions ought to be taken in dealing with the Indians. He said in a candid manner that he himself, after all the precautions he had taken, was not satisfied that he had done the best that could be done for the Indians.

The story of the Songhees Indian reserve is simply this. It was in the city of Victoria; like the other reserve we have been