

addition, there were several petitions from persons in the North-West; and Mr. Dennis, referring to those petitions, and dealing with the question, wrote as follows:—

"The question raised by His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor as to the manner in which the claims of settlers may be adjusted, who located upon lands in the North-West Territories previous to the transfer, involving, as it does, a question of policy, is for the Minister to consider."

So that it appears that up to that time, although a commissioner had been appointed, the Minister had arrived at no conclusion as to the manner in which he should deal with those claims:

"The undersigned would, however, in reference thereto, venture to express the opinion that land so settled on, without the same may possess exceptional value owing to its situation, and had been taken up with a view to speculation, if the claimant shall have been constantly residing upon and cultivating it to a reasonable extent, should be granted free to the occupant. To give effect to such a policy, however, legislation would be required."

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was in March, 1877, and it was a question of simply giving to those people the land upon which they were settled—doing for them, in fact, the very thing the offering to do which afterwards, by this Government, is denounced by the hon. member who has moved this resolution, as a failure of justice to those people—simply the granting of the lands on which they were located, and he is told that legislation will be necessary in order to enable him to do it. And yet, Sir, although another Session of Parliament came and passed afterwards, during which he had the opportunity of getting that legislation, the Session opened and closed without any legislation being attempted, the case of the half-breeds being left precisely as it was, in spite of the recommendation of Mr. Dennis, his own deputy. That, Sir, I think, may fairly illustrate the manner in which the hon. gentleman dealt with those claims. He had claims of a similar kind to deal with in Manitoba. He had to deal with what were usually called the stake claims; and I find that when a schedule was submitted to him of names for his decision as to whether they should have their land or not, nine-tenths of them were bracketed, and the words were written after them, "No—D. M.," to the effect that these people had no claims and should not receive any consideration whatever. What was the condition in which those people were at that time? I have here a letter which, I think, will show the spirit in which these hon. gentlemen dealt with affairs in the North-West. The letter is dated Winnipeg, 29th September, 1877. It is signed by the Rev. Father Lacombe, whose interest in matters in the North-West is well known. It is not addressed to the hon. gentleman for reasons which I suppose the postscript of the letter will sufficiently explain. It is addressed to a gentleman at that time a colleague of the hon. gentleman, the Hon. Mr. Pelletier, then Minister of Agriculture, who had a seat in the other House. The letter was to this effect:

"VERY DEAR SIR,—As you desired me, during your visit to Manitoba, to acquaint you privately with such information as might aid you in the administration of our Province, I now frankly and confidently communicate the annexed newspaper articles.

"I take the liberty of drawing your attention to those articles, as well as to the remarks which I shall add.

"It must be understood that I am far from approving the violent and unseemly language of the English article. It appears to me that we may protest without being insulting.

"I regret to say that many of the sentiments expressed in those articles are participated in by a great many persons in our Province. Resolutions, coming from Ottawa, threaten to give a fatal blow to our immigration. The Government ask \$5 per acre for land on the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. It is too much even for speculation, as speculators sell the same lands for \$2 per acre. But above all it is a great deal too much when we consider that those lands are occupied by immigrants who have expended all they had to instal themselves on those lands. If the Government persevere in this determination they will ruin many who accepted the invitation they made them to settle in Manitoba.

"I understand, moreover, that the question of 'stake-claims (Stake-claims) is to be regulated in a manner still more unjust; they wish to draw lots in favor of the Metis children, for lands owned at Rat River

and elsewhere anterior to the transfer. For more than seven years those lands, recognised among the population as the property of those who took them, were frequently sold and exchanged. And to-day, on account of these exchanges, there are at Rat River, in the parish of St. Pierre, more than fifty resident families. These families established themselves in good faith, and behold it is now thought to dispossess the greater part of them, of whom many are immigrants, who arrived in spring, bought the land and made outlay for the purpose of establishing themselves. The pretext invoked is, that on certain farms there is little or no cultivation—a pretext which to me seems ill-founded, because those lands were at any rate possessed by those who claim them, before the reserves for Metis children were localised in this place or vicinity. If the lands were possessed then, they are still the property of those who claim them, and consequently an injustice is done in dispossessing them of them. If, on the other hand, these lands were not owned at the time of the localisation of the reserves, how can it be pretended that their cultivation would have ensured their possession? The Government has not yet said anything officially, and secretly they direct the lottery of these lands, so that the odium of dispossessing the occupants may fall on the children of the Metis, to whom these lands shall thus come.

"Evidently the Government are ill-informed, otherwise they would not, for the sake of a few hundred acres of land, consent to draw upon themselves the odium these resolutions would create, to paralyse immigration, and to throw another brand of discord among the population.

"Such are the remarks, which in true friendship, I have thought it my duty to submit for your consideration.

"I remain with much respect, your very humble and obedient servant,
(Signed). ALB. LACOMBE, Ptre., O.M.I."

Then here is a personal postscript:

"Permit me to avail myself of this opportunity to offer you, with all my heart, my best wishes for the New Year."

Here is a second postscript, which is an important one:

"I forgot to tell you that I advised Mgr. Taché to write to the Government. Although he regretted all these misunderstandings, he replied that he would not venture to write to Ottawa, inasmuch as he had never received anything but refusals, and he feared to compromise the case, rather than benefit it, by writing on the subject."

That, Sir, was the opinion of His Grace the Archbishop of the manner in which hon. gentlemen opposite treated questions concerning the North-West in which he felt a deep interest, when he ventured to send either petitions or letters to them with regard to those questions. Now, Sir, it is well known that when the change of Government took place, although hon. gentlemen opposite had done nothing to provide by legislation for the settlement of these half-breed claims, the Conservative Government, in its first Session, that of 1879, passed an Act in which they took power to settle these claims. That Act has been referred to by the hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. Laurier) on two or three occasions. He has referred to it to-night, and intimated that the first thing done under it was the appointment of the commission last spring. I do not desire, for a single moment, to charge the hon. gentleman with mis-stating, because I believe him to be incapable of wilfully mis-stating; but I charge him with not having as carefully studied the question as its importance deserves, and as he certainly ought to have studied it. On the 1st June, 1883, an Order in Council was passed, based on a memorandum of the Minister of the Interior, of the 31st May, 1883, separating the offices of Surveyor General and Deputy Head of the Department, creating Mr. Lindsay Russell Surveyor General, with the rank of Deputy Head, and in this memorandum is the following clause:

"The duties of the Surveyor General will necessarily require that he shall spend a considerable part of each season in the North-West, so that he may have the opportunity of directing the operations of the staff in the field; in connection with and in addition to which the opportunity would be afforded him of investigating and finally settling upon the spot, a large class of long-standing and somewhat complicated claims to land, arising at various points in the Territories. Invested as he would be with the rank and authority of a Deputy Head, and bringing to bear on the cases submitted for his adjudication the experience he has acquired in the administration of Dominion lands, his decisions would naturally command the respect and acquiescence of those whom they most directly affect, as well as the confidence of the general public."

Then, by an Order in Council of 7th July, 1883, arrangements were made for dealing with the claims of actual settlers in the Prince Albert and Edmonton districts to obtain titles to the lands they occupied, and it was the intention of Mr. Lindsay Russell to have left at once for the