

"The rebellion of 1869-70 was not without its lessons for Riel, and he has closely observed them. He saw more plainly after it was over than before what a desperate and determined leader could do, backed by a force of wary and devoted half-breeds, inured to hardships and familiar with the country. Before he made up his mind to raise the standard of a second insurrection he no doubt took stock of all the chances and prepared to meet them. We do not believe that he ventured on an open revolt so far in the interior as Carlton without having the most reliable assurances of support from a number of the Indian chiefs, whose minds he had been poisoning for months without the least interference."

The *Mail* correspondent, writing from Batoche, says:

"Without doubt it is necessary to assert authority, but as it is authority which is to blame, its duty is to assert itself in such a manner as to prove that it is able at least to recognise its wrongs."

I say again it is abundantly clear from the evidence submitted by the member for West Durham and the member for Quebec East and myself that the half-breeds had grounds for complaint, that the white settlers had grievances that they could not get redressed. I say that the Indians were robbed, cheated, swindled, and that the solemn promises made by the Government to the Indians were violated. I say that the Government had abundant evidence of all this. I say that with all these facts before the Government, the First Minister carelessly and negligently and with criminal apathy delayed the investigation of those grievances; he refused even to consider them until after the rebellion broke out. I say, this being the case, how does this incompetent, incapable, imbecile Government hope to escape the punishment that should follow wrongdoing; how does this Government expect to escape the indignation of a justly aroused and insensed people? By concealing from this Parliament and people of Canada as the First Minister has done, a mass of the evidence in his possession, and on which the people could form a clearer judgment as to the responsibility of Ministers? No; they cannot so escape. There is more than enough of convincing evidence of criminal neglect now before Parliament to condemn a dozen Administrations. Do they hope to escape by distorting the evidence and misrepresenting the facts, and by doing as the Secretary of State has done, denying that the half-breeds ever petitioned or memorialised the Government for a redress of their wrongs; and by doing, as the *Montreal Gazette*, the organ of the Government, has done, declaring that:

"There has been no neglect. Nearly every claim has been passed upon and adjusted long since; those upon which the pretext of the rebellion is based are not to be entertained for a moment."

or by doing as the Minister of the Interior in his place in the Senate, has done, by declaring that:

"The half-breeds had no grievance whatever in relation to their lands, or to any other matter. No half-breeds was ever disturbed or threatened with disturbance in the occupation of his land. Not in one solitary case. No half-breed delegation came to Ottawa to complain of ill-treatment or disturbance in relation to their lands, no complaint on behalf of the half-breeds was ever made on the floor of Parliament, no grievance existed, and that will be made manifest when the papers are brought down."

"Until Riel arrived in this country there was no disturbance, no threatened disturbance. Riel is an incendiary, and he had great influence with the half-breeds. From the moment he arrived in this country he was endeavoring, no doubt, to excite them to discontent, but there was not the slightest apprehension of that discontent taking any form more serious than words until the outbreak actually took place."

I say this Government cannot so escape the responsibility for their misconduct. The evidence is too strong, the guilt too clear, to permit of escape. Their own conduct, their own dealing with this whole question in recent months, is the clearest possible evidence of their criminal neglect to discharge the most important duties that could devolve on any Government. What did they do? They issued a commission to investigate these old grievances, that the Secretary of State, the Minister of the Interior, and the *Montreal Gazette* never heard of. The returns laid before Parliament show that on the 26th of January last Sir D. Macpherson reported to the Governor in Council that measures be taken to settle the claims of the half-breeds; that on the 28th an Order in Council, such as he asked for, was passed, and that proceeding deliberately he telegraphed to Mr. Dewdney on February 4th:

"The Government has decided to investigate the claims of the half-breeds, and with that view has directed an enumeration of those who

did not participate in the grant under the Manitoba Act. No representations received recently."

But his colleague, the Minister of Justice, when asked if any complaints had been presented from the half-breeds on the 2nd of June last, stated:

"Considering the gravity of the question, the House should not be surprised if he confined himself strictly to answering the question. The Government had received between the 1st of January, 1879, and the 1st of March, 1885, from various persons taking special interest in the North-West, and among others, Monseigneur Grandin, Bishop of St. Albert, and Monseigneur Pache, written representations respecting the position of the half-breeds of the North-West, and the best way of ameliorating it. There was no record of any written representations from Mr. Royal, and no records of verbal representations existed."

I say therefore, that the First Minister and his colleagues cannot so escape their personal responsibility, for their negligence and carelessness in the administration of affairs in the North-West. The *Mail* newspaper suggests another mode by which these hon. gentlemen can escape the responsibility that properly rests on their shoulders. The *Mail* says that delay was a sound policy; that time solves all difficulties, and that the First Minister was justified in not investigating these claims because time might help him. That policy—the policy of delay, the hon. gentleman has lived on for the last 25 years. It is a policy which has cost this country millions of money, a policy which has provoked two rebellions, a policy which has cost this country almost oceans of human blood and many human lives. The *Mail* says:

"There is such a thing as too much haste. Sir John Macdonald is right enough in his alleged belief that time settles a good many problems which men only muddle by rash action. It is possible to err in this direction, we may admit; but it is certain that undue haste in the North-West might have been disastrous. Delay has weakened Riel and strengthened General Middleton. Delay has enabled the officials to bring pressure to bear on the Indians."

Yes Sir, delay accomplishes many things; delay caused the rebellion; delay left the settlers unprotected, when the rebellion did break out; delay induced the half-breeds to fight at Duck Lake; delay gave opportunity to raise the Indians, excited by the news of the Duck Lake victory; delay caused the massacre at Frog Lake; delay caused all the sufferings and losses at Battleford and Fort Pitt; delay gave an opportunity for the destruction of hundreds of homesteads, of much property, and of many valuable lives; delay caused the battle at Fish Creek; delay caused the battle of Batoche; delay caused many Canadian homes to mourn; delay has caused the shedding of blood; delay has caused the loss of many human lives; delay has scattered desolation, ruin, death, among the peaceful homes of the half-breeds of the West, and this delay is justified by the Government and its organs. Now, Sir, there is still another proof, if that were wanting, of the guilt of hon. gentlemen opposite, of their gross misconduct and their criminal neglect in dealing with the claims of the half-breeds. After life was lost, after blood was spilt, after ruin was scattered abroad, this Government settled very nearly, if not altogether, 400 of these identical grievances of these identical half-breeds, which the Secretary of State, the Minister of Interior, the *Mail* and the *Gazette* never heard of; 400 of these grievances have, since the half-breeds took up arms to redress their wrongs, been recognised by the Government. This fact alone is enough to stamp this Administration as the most incompetent, the most reckless, the most imbecile, and the most criminal Administration that ever the country was cursed with. What have you gentlemen on the Treasury benches done south of Clarke's Crossing? You have, after life was lost and blood was spilt, after ruin, desolation and death to the half-breeds followed your tracks—you have recognised these claims, you have righted these wrongs, redressed these grievances which existed for years, and yielded to the half-breeds more than the half-breeds ever demanded. North of Clarke's Crossing what have you done? you have recognised the same identical claims, righted the same identical wrongs, and redressed the same