

any hon. member in this House if the whole speech of the hon. gentleman is not a justification, an apology, an excuse for the rising in the North-West; a justification, an apology, an excuse for murder.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No, no.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD—a justification, an excuse for anarchy.

Mr. CAMERON (Huron). You are the criminals.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I say that the whole course of the Opposition in this House, the whole course of the Opposition out of this House, every effort made by them, every statement made by them in the House and the press, has been with the object of injuring the Government, irrespective of the country, whatever hon. gentlemen opposite may say. What care they whether the future prospects of the North-West be prejudiced or affected? If they can get up a cry or a means of attack on the Government, they do not care. They would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven. There are two things that will rise in the minds of the auditors of the hon. gentleman's speech, and those are, that he never alluded, except very cursorily, to the course of events before 1878-79. How reticent he was about the policy of the Government of which he was a member sometimes, and sometimes not. In the next place, he has not ventured, in the whole of his seven hours' speech, to say that the alleged grievances of the half-breeds were just.

Mr. BLAKE. Hear, hear.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. It is true he has quoted their grievances; it is true he has gone down to the cellars of the reading room and raked up every newspaper coming from the North-West, to read little paragraphs written by country editors for the special benefit of their special locality. He has read them as evidence of writings withheld by the Government. Whenever he has read a paper he has said: There is no answer to this; and he supposes there must have been an answer, and that answer must have been suppressed.

Mr. CAMERON (Huron). So they were.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. The hon. member for South Huron—no, he does not say that; he is a gentleman, though a mistaken gentleman. It is the hon. gentleman behind him who has said it. I say, in the first place, the hon. gentleman has never, in the whole course of his long speech, said that the claims of the half-breeds to be put on the same footing with the half-breeds of Manitoba were just and legal. He has not dropped a single word to that effect. Why? Because the Government of which he was a member decided solemnly they had no such claim; that they had no claims at all, no more than the white settler who went in. The hon. gentleman, sometimes in the Government and sometimes not there—I cannot tell whether he was in at the very hour when the policy of the Mackenzie Government was declared in a solemn despatch—but he had it; he has had it in his hands; he has read a portion of it to-night; he has not quoted the whole of that despatch—that despatch in which the hon. member for Bothwell declared that the half-breeds had no rights. Does the hon. gentleman (Mr. Mills) deny that there is such a despatch? Does the hon. gentleman deny that he does not know it, that he has not read it, that he has not read a portion of it? Then I shall read it. Thus runs the solemn despatch of the 13th February, 1878, written by the then Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Laird. I shall read the whole of the despatch. It is addressed to the hon. member for Bothwell, Minister of the Interior:

"I have the honor to transmit herewith a petition of certain half-breeds of St. Laurent, relating to several matters affecting their interests in this country. Though the petition is addressed to the Lieutenant

Governor of the North-West Territory, yet, as it refers to questions for the most part wholly under the control of the Dominion Parliament and Government, I am requested to forward it to His Excellency the Governor in Council. I hope you will have the goodness at an early day to lay it before His Excellency in Council."

At an early day—the hon. gentleman is very anxious about an early day:

"Should it be the intention of the Government to appoint any additional members to the Council of the North-West Territories, the prayer of the petitioners, that such should be selected from the old residents of the country, is well worthy of consideration. It is important that the land policy of the Government towards old settlers and others living for many years in the territory should be declared. It appears to me that they have a claim to some more speedy means—"

Speedy!

"speedy means for acquiring a title for settlement purposes than the homestead provisions of the Dominion Lands Act. To prevent disputes between neighbors, it is highly desirable that the survey of lands settled upon along the principal rivers should be prosecuted with all convenient speed."

Just put that map on the Table, please, and see what speed has been made with the survey.

"With respect to the prayer for assistance in procuring seeds and implements to commence farming operations, it is similar to the request made to me by the half-breeds of Bow River during the Blackfeet treaty negotiations, and which I forwarded to you and commended to the favorable consideration of the Government."

That is signed by Mr. Laird. This is the answer of the Government, a portion of which the hon. gentleman alluded to, but he did not read the whole:

"Department of the Interior, Ottawa, 18th March, 1878."

The Government went out, I think, in October, 1878.

An hon. MEMBER. September.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. No, October. They ought to have gone out in September, but they did not.

"Sir,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch (No. 47) of the 13th ultimo, covering a petition addressed to you by certain half-breeds of the parish of St. Laurent, relating to several matters affecting the interest of the half-breeds in the North-West. You are requested to inform the petitioners that I shall have much pleasure—"

Mr. Mills will have much pleasure; I beg his pardon, the Minister of the Interior of that day, will have much pleasure—

"in submitting their petition for the consideration of His Excellency the Governor General in Council. In the meantime, you may intimate to the petitioners that should it be thought desirable to appoint additional members to the Council of the North-West, I shall be prepared to recommend for His Excellency's consideration their application that such members should be selected from the old residents in the Territories"—

Not elected—

"and that if possible one of them should be of French Canadian origin. The propriety of passing an Act to secure for the half-breeds some more speedy means of acquiring a title for settlement purposes than under the provisions of the present homestead and Dominion Lands Act has for some time past, engaged my attention."

Well, he took office in 1873.

Mr. MILLS. No.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Well, the Government got in in 1873, and I suppose his predecessor was not a dummy; his predecessor was as able as the hon. gentleman himself, his predecessor had the same responsibility as himself, and the hon. gentleman, being his successor in the same Administration, took upon himself all the responsibility of what his predecessor did or did not do.

"As regards the application of the petitioners for an early survey of the settled lands along the principal rivers, I have to request you to inform the petitioners that the survey of such lands has already been carried out, to some extent, and will be prosecuted as rapidly as the funds at the disposal of the Department will permit."

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.