

by time. The demands are apt to be exaggerated by time. The situation grows complicated by time, and in this case it was perfectly clear it was to become more complicated by time, because we were dealing at that moment with a state of things in which but comparatively few of the half breed population had taken up land. There were very considerable numbers at certain points to which I have referred; but taking the whole population of the Territories a large number of them had not taken up and improved lands at that time, and therefore there arose no question on the two titles as to the bulk of the half-breed population, as to at all events the majority of the half-breed population—I mean the right to the extinguishment of the Indian title and their rights as settlers. That arose only as to those who had settled; but it was clear it was going to arise with a much larger proportion of the half-breeds from year to year because it was inevitable they must starve or settle. Those who had not settled lived entirely by the chase of the buffalo and by freighting, and the buffalo having disappeared, they must either starve or settle; and settling, of course, the question of their title as settlers as well as the Indian title would arise. Was it because there was no pressure upon the Government that this matter slipped by neglected? Not so. As I have said, their Deputy Minister had warned them; the North-West Council had warned them; the Governor had warned them; and the three advisors whom they called into council had warned them that it was a question which ought to be settled at once, delay in the settlement of which would enhance the difficulty, and which therefore merited and demanded the early attention of the Government. They did nothing during those six years; they formed no ministerial plan; they enunciated no ministerial policy; they passed no Order in Council; they did not even take the preliminary steps of having an enumeration; they waited until the outbreak was on foot, and then they acted as I will show you after a while. During 1879, after having obtained the parliamentary authority to which I have referred, nothing was done. But on 1st December of that year Colonel Richardson, who had been for many years as a stipendary magistrate and a member of the council in the Territories, being in Ottawa, gave a memorandum, no doubt at the request of the Government, to Colonel Dennis, and in that memorandum he says:

"As soon as steps are taken to ascertain the number of half-breeds in the Territory who have not already shared in the Manitoba grant the scheme suggested by Colonel Dennis in the conclusion of his memorandum would I think give satisfaction generally."

He differs, however from him on two points: First, he thinks there should be no special educational facilities; and second, there is no need to teach the half-breeds to raise and care for stock, because they know all about it, and in fact they teach the whites the proper way of raising and caring for stock in that country. He adds that some half-breeds would prefer settling near white settlements. It seems to be very clear that the First Minister in charge of this matter was reluctant to recognise this claim. And that seems to be apparent from another letter by Colonel Richardson to Colonel Dennis, written on 13th January, 1880. That letter runs as follows:—

"DEAR COLONEL DENNIS,—Having passed three years in the North-West and during that period seen a good deal of the half-breed population, the following induced by the remarks of the right hon. the Premier in my presence last Saturday, may not be out of place, the subject of dealing with the half-breed element of the North-West being, as I then gathered, intended for early discussion.

"1. These half-breeds claim and insist that as a distinct class they have a share in the Indian title to the land outside of Manitoba which has not been extinguished, and as such distinct class entitled equally with the half-breeds of Manitoba to special consideration. That grounds exist for such contention appear by reference to statutes of Canada, 1870, Cap. 3, sec. 21.

"2. Admitting these half-breeds might (as some few have, but now regret) joined in the Indian treaties, I am convinced such a contingency is not only not probable, but that if they requested they would reject

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the offer; besides I do not think their joining in the Indian treaties would be in the public interest, but decidedly the opposite.

"How best to deal with the element has, as you are aware, been considered and you already hold my views on the subject.

"I may however be permitted to express the opinion that opportunities now present themselves for removing the dissatisfaction existing among these people, and securing their good will towards the Government, because: 1. Their former occupation as hunters is gone. 2. They are as a class destitute. A further reason for urging as I respectfully do, early action is that they are scattered among the Indians and lately subjected to the evil influences of leading spirits of the Manitoba troubles of 1870, who during the past season have been traversing the country doing at least 'no good.'"

Again you see, Mr. Speaker, the importance, in the view of a magistrate from the Territories, of early action, the danger of delay, the favorable character of the conjuncture of circumstances which then presented themselves for a settlement in a form which would be permanently beneficial to the half-breeds and at the same time to the country, and the efforts to remove the difficulty which he saw stood in the way from conversations he had with the Minister who seems to have held that the half-breeds had no well founded claim, and to have suggested that the Indian treaty was a good solution for any such claim. Nothing was done in 1880, although the year opened, as I have said, by this further communication from Colonel Richardson. In that year once again there was reference to danger, for amongst the papers brought down is a letter from W. L. Orde, Indian agent and clerk, North-West Indian Superintendency, Battleford, dated 3rd April, as follows:—

"I have the honor to inform you that an authentic report has reached here from the south, that Louis Riel is now agitating amongst the half-breeds, and the Sioux, and Crow Indians, it is said with a view of an attack upon the Blackfeet and Blood Indians, the ostensible object being to wrest from the latter, a large number of stolen ponies. He may have other evil designs, and I think it well to let you know."

But although nothing was done at Ottawa, pressure was applied to Ottawa. In the spring of 1880, the half-breed inhabitants of Manitoba Village, Lake Manitoba, North-West Territories, signed a petition which contains these words:

"And whereas the half-breed heads of families, and the children of the same, born in or resident in the Territories, previously to 15th July, 1870, have not yet had their claims to equal rights and privileges with their brethren in the Province of Manitoba, investigated as is provided for by sub-section 'E' of clause 125, 43 Vic., Chap. 31; and whereas the continued delay in ascertaining and investigating said claims, is creating great and general dissatisfaction throughout the Territories, we your petitioners do humbly pray that you will cause a commission to be issued at an early date to enquire into and confirm the said claims, not only with regard to scrip and allotments of lands as provided for in Manitoba, but moreover to confirm the titles of lands occupied by or purchased by parties from occupants of claims taken previously to the transfer of the Territories to the Dominion of Canada."

On the 10th of May, 1880, the Deputy Superintendent General acknowledges that petition, and states that it will be duly laid before the Minister for consideration. It was under consideration until 1885. On the 23rd of February, 1880, there was a meeting at Duck Lake to which I adverted a few days ago, called by Father André to protest against the notion of abolishing the territorial government; and in his speech, as reported in the newspapers, Father André said:

"Before long this together with several other settlements, would be entitled to representation in the council at Battleford. Then the council would be in a better position to speak in the name of the people, to press their wants and remedy their grievances at Ottawa."

Showing that they had even then wants and grievances, in the opinion of the speaker, which required pressing, and in respect of which they valued even that imperfect and rudimentary system of representation, under which they hoped soon to have a member in that district. On the same occasion, another of the speakers, Mr. Abraham Montour, said:

"Several other petitions had already been forwarded to Ottawa, setting forth the rights and certain wants of the half-breed element throughout the territory, and the action of the Government was still to be learned. He feared the present petition would receive similar treatment."