

special Act of Parliament. There are three methods: In the first place, section 49 of the Indian Act provides for the surrender under certain conditions; in the second place, the amending Act of 1911 provides that where a surrender cannot be obtained although it is absolutely essential to the progress and development of great communities that the Indians should be removed to some other reservation, then the judge of the Exchequer Court of Canada is vested with certain duties and he is authorized to make a report on which the Governor in Council can act; and in the third place, there may be obtained a special Act of Parliament, which course was adopted by my hon. friend (Mr. Oliver) and the Government of which he was a member in 1911.

So far as this Government is concerned, we realize to the full the duty of properly safeguarding the rights of the Indians and of protecting their interests, and we purpose doing so. In so far as this transaction is concerned, it is one of which the department had no official knowledge until after the hon. gentleman's question on Monday last. I believe since that time there have been some letters from the Indian agent, but the proceedings which have been taken by the Government of British Columbia, in so far as they are not taken under the Indian Act, cannot operate to deprive the Indians of any right or title, and I would like to say—subject to any argument which may be advanced by the Government of British Columbia, to which of course we shall give very respectful consideration,—it seems to me that the Government of British Columbia must come to the Government of Canada before the transaction to which the hon. gentleman has alluded can be carried into effect. The rights of the Indians are protected by the Indian Act and by the Indian Amendment Act of 1911, which is the law of this country, and it will be not only our right but our duty to see that the rights of the Indians are protected in the way in which we all agree they should be protected.

So far as handing over considerable amounts of money to the unfettered control of the Indians is concerned, I am not in so good a position as is my hon. friend to judge of the merits or demerits of such a proposition. I suppose it would depend in every case very much on the degree of advancement, self-control, and education, of the particular Indians concerned; and, as I do not know what the character of these Indians was, either in the case of the Songhees reserve or in the case of the Kitsilano reserve, I am unable to express either assent to or dissent from the view the hon. gentleman has voiced this afternoon. I do agree that it is undesirable, unless Indians have

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acquired a certain character and capacity for self-control, to place very large sums of money in their hands in such a way that these moneys could be dissipated with no good to the Indians and possibly with a great deal of detriment.

I desire only in conclusion to advert to the fact that an arrangement has been made for an inquiry into the Indian reserves of British Columbia, and no doubt my hon. friend has seen fit to read the agreement which has been placed upon the table of the House. It provides for an inquiry by a commission which has been constituted of men who, I think, are very capable of making such an inquiry into the whole question, and under that agreement it will be incumbent upon the Government of the province of British Columbia to provide any additional reserves necessary for the accommodation of the Indians in the province, and to make such provision in respect of reserves as will be satisfactory to them. That commission is about to engage in its work, and it would seem to me that the matter which the hon. gentleman has brought to the attention of the House is one that would properly come within the scope of that commission. At least I understand from my hon. friend the Minister of Justice that that is the view which the Department of Justice takes. I therefore cannot do more at the moment than assure the hon. member that the Government is thoroughly alive to its duty of protecting and safeguarding the interests of the Indians of British Columbia and the Indians of every other part of the country, and that we shall give to this subject the very serious and earnest consideration which it undoubtedly deserves.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I submit that the answer which my right hon. friend the leader of the Government has given to my hon. friend from Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) does not at all cover the case which has been brought to the attention of the House. The right hon. gentleman has stated that the matter can be properly dealt with by the commission which has been appointed to investigate the rights which have been long in dispute between the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia with regard to what are known as the reversionary rights of the Indians. This is another and a different matter. The commission which has been appointed, as I understand the Order in Council—I have not read it, but have heard it read—has reference simply to the dispute of which I speak, and is to investigate the respective rights of the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia as regards the Indian lands. The Government of British Columbia claimed that the lands are