

the timber limit to Messrs. Cook & Sutherland—carried this Order in Council after our defeat at the polls; that it was between the 17th September and the 17th October—the period of our resignation—that this Order in Council was adopted. Now, that is true; and I will state by-and-bye what were the circumstances that, I think, justified our Government at that time in so acting. But, in the first place, I would say that the right hon. gentleman who led the Government in 1873 set us the example in this particular, for I find that timber limits were granted to various parties—to Fuller, to Fowler, and others—between the 22nd October and the 3rd November. I think it was upon the 3rd of November that the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues resigned their positions in the Government; and on that day an Order in Council was carried granting timber limits to various parties. I will also say this, because I do not wish to misrepresent the matter, or to create a false impression with a view of promoting controversy, that the hon. gentleman had applications from Mr. Fuller and others for timber limits between Lake Superior and the Red River settlements, and that when this application was made for a timber limit, after some correspondence on the subject, the Government informed Mr. Fuller and others that the Indian title had not yet been extinguished—this was in February, 1873—but that, as soon as it was extinguished, if Mr. Fuller and the other parties chose to go on and erect mills, the Government would then be prepared to consider their application. Well, it was between that period and the resignation of the Government that the Indian title was extinguished; and so the Government, although it was the 3rd November when they carried the Order in Council giving effect to the policy which had been at an earlier period determined upon—that is, at the period while they still enjoyed the confidence of the people as their representatives in Parliament. Now, I will say this, that we did exactly the same thing. When Mr. Sutherland applied for the limit on the upper waters of Saskatchewan, which was during the office of my predecessor, Mr. Laird, the Indian title had not yet been extinguished in that section of the country; and almost the same answer was conveyed to Mr. Sutherland that the previous Government had, some years before, under exactly the same circumstances, given to Mr. Fuller, namely, that the Indian title had not been extinguished, but that, as soon as it was, consideration would be given to the application. After the Indian title was extinguished Messrs. Sutherland & Cook renewed their application. The observation made by the hon. the Minister of Justice, that we granted 200 square miles, whereas in the case of the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Rykert), they only granted 100 square miles, seems to me to be altogether beside the question raised by the hon. member for South Oxford (Sir Richard Cartwright). It was not a question whether the limit was large or small. Whether the transaction was proper or improper did not depend on the size of the limit. The hon. gentleman will see, if he looks at the Orders in Council brought down in 1882, that some hon. gentlemen, who had limits of very considerable extent, were granted additional limits; and I find that in one case an additional limit of 100

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square miles was granted to a party over and above what they had before. That was in the case of Messrs McLaren, Peels, Haggart & Nichol. The hon. the Minister reports that Messrs. McLaren & Co. also asked to have granted to them, in the vicinity of Shell River, an additional limit of 100 square miles. Then, when we look at the limits these gentlemen had before, we find they also had 100 square miles. Now, whether that was too an extensive territory or not depended altogether on certain circumstances. I find in the returns brought down that some lumbermen, who had limits acquired only three or four years before, informed the Government that the timber on their limits was exhausted. Here is a mill, the machinery of which is scarcely worn at all, that will become useless unless an additional limit can be acquired. Now, I remember very well that at the time this limit was granted on the upper waters of the Saskatchewan, a report was made. That report if not ought to be among the papers of the Department. Col. Dennis, who was the Surveyor General at the time, made an estimate as to the proper length of time the timber should last on a limit of 200 square miles, with such a mill as these gentlemen proposed to establish; and, if I remember rightly, it was something between twelve and fifteen years. At all events, it was a period considerably short of twenty-one years for which a lease was granted. It was not in the public interest that the limits should be sold, that large expense should be incurred in the erection of mills where the timber would only supply a mill for a very short time. I wish to notice another thing which has been discussed in the press supporting the Administration, and occasionally by members in this House—the statement which has been made that we authorised Messrs. Cook & Sutherland to acquire the territory of 200 square miles in blocks not less than twenty miles in extent. That matter was well considered. I remember that it was discussed again and again in view of the extent of the timber area in those districts; and that provision was made after full consideration. We found that on many rivers emptying into the Saskatchewan, especially those which were not near its source, the timber was only a fringe extending about a quarter of a mile, sometimes half a mile, and rarely a mile in depth. It seemed to me, and also to the Surveyor General and to the Deputy Minister at that time, with whom I discussed the matter before bringing it to the attention of my colleagues, that it was not desirable that the lumbermen should be encouraged to cut off these areas of timber which formed the fringes along the rivers, but that this timber should be left in a large measure for the supply of the settlers in the way of fencing material and other things which they required, as well as the timber which they might find on their homesteads; and that, therefore, if we said that no plot to be taken by lumbermen should be less than 20 miles in extent, the lumbermen would not infringe on that timber because they would not care to pay the dues on an area of 20 miles when perhaps the timber would not cover more than one third of that ground. The object we had was to force the lumbermen to go into those districts which were generally covered by timber, which were properly timber districts, in contradistinction to these timber fringes which were found along the