

98. The Indians, as a general rule, will sell anything for which a purchaser offers, often without minutely inquiring into their right to do so, and this through their ignorance or carelessness.

99. The system of holding in common does not tend to impress the value of property on their minds; the old adage, that what is everybody's business is done by no one, is unusually applicable in this case.

100. The plough is too often left to rot in the fields during the winter, and the seine on the river shore; and it has happened more than once that a yoke of oxen has been over-worked while there was a demand for labour, and allowed to die of starvation afterwards, because it was no individual's stated business to feed them.

101. These careless habits are the moral effects of the system now in force; to eradicate these habits, and at the same time to modify the system which they in the first instance rendered necessary, requires great caution.

102. If it was attempted to teach the Indian to feel responsibility, by giving him the absolute control of property, he would instantly sell it, and become worse off than before. The present state of things, on the other hand, shows, and reason points out, that if he has no rights of property at all, he will never assume the responsibility they impose.

103. With a view to ascertain the opinions of some gentlemen who, from near connexion and long intimacy with the Indians, would be likely to give sound advice, your Excellency directed me to write the letter which I here insert, placing the views which you had been led to entertain on the subject in the form of a series of questions.

Scheme suggested by Sir Edmund Head.

104. Mr. Oliphant in his report had broached opinions very similar to those which your Excellency desired me to embody in the letter I allude to. He says, "In order, however, more thoroughly to develop the system by which such results may be anticipated, it seems indispensable that the same privileges of responsible ownership which are granted with regard to moveables, should also be extended to land, subject however to certain modifications. The liabilities which attach to the possession of landed property are so different in their character, so much more complicated and onerous than those which attach to moveables, that it by no means follows that a people which is sufficiently enlightened and civilized to assume the one is also in a condition to undertake the other. On the contrary, I do not think that the Indians are far enough advanced to become actual freeholders. Their own desire upon the subject, frequently expressed to me, has been that they should be allowed allotments of the reserve to be settled upon themselves and their children, not by a deed in which the Crown should relinquish the fee, but that by an arrangement of the tribe they should be guaranteed from intrusion, and at the same time prevented from alienating to other members, except at the recommendation of the local superintendent, where such a conveyance would be manifestly for the benefit of both parties."

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Concurred in by the Rev. Dr. M'Murray

105. The letter to Mr. M'Murray was as follows:

Reverend Sir,

Indian Department, Quebec, 19 May 1855.

His Excellency the Governor-general has reflected with much interest on a conversation which he had with you when you were at Quebec, on the subject of gradually civilizing a portion of the Indians. His Excellency is most desirous of receiving from you and from others most conversant with this people, such hints as may be made the ground-work of future action in so important a matter. The outline of the plan which his Excellency had in view may be briefly stated as follows:

I. That each local superintendant should be called upon to report the names of those members of each settlement under his care, whose previous education and habits of industry make it likely that they might be fit and desirous of assuming a mode of life different from the majority of their race.

II. That if, on inquiry, such a desire was manifested by each or any of these individuals, such person should undergo a sort of examination or inquiry before two or three commissioners interested in the welfare of the Indians, and thoroughly conversant with their habits and wants.

III. That the following points should be inquired into by such commissioners:

1st. Whether the individual Indian had shown proof of steady industrious habits, so as to be fit to earn his own bread.

2d. Whether he was acquainted with any trade.

3d. Whether he could read and write, and was acquainted with the elements of religion.

4th. Whether he had any notion of the rights and duties conferred and imposed by civil society on its members.

IV. That on its appearing that the above questions could be answered satisfactorily, the Governor-general should have power to confer on such individual a portion of Indian land not exceeding \_\_\_\_\_ acres, to be ultimately held in fee and common socage, and should advance for a year or two a certain small sum for the purchase of seed and agricultural implements from the Indian funds, but that such individual should cease to have any claim on the funds of the tribe in any other shape.