

number of the hon. gentleman's followers, who had deep faith and reposed confidence in his word, go to the Table and look for evidences of the energy and activity of their leader; and, from the blank stare which was seen on their faces, it was evident that the map did not show much, that it did not show anything—for the facts are these: the surveys have been carried on by the hon. member for Bothwell when in charge of the Department.

Mr. HESSON. The hon. member for Bothwell surveyed less than 2,000,000 acres. The former Conservative Government surveyed more than 9,000,000 acres and the present Government more than 55,000,000 acres.

Mr. LAURIER. The hon. gentleman knows that the world was not created in a day. The first thing created was light. The first thing to be done in order to make surveys was to draw the meridian lines, and the reports show that my hon. friend directed his efforts in 1877 to drawing meridian lines in order to proceed with the survey of townships. That was the first thing to be done. I hope this explanation will satisfy the hon. member for North Perth. In fact, as far back as 1876 my hon. friend had addressed himself to this subject, and addressed himself to it in that thorough manner in which he approaches any subject. Governor Laird in 1877 addressed my hon. friend as follows upon the subject of surveys:

"The subject is one materially affecting the prosperity of these and other settlements in the Territory. I would hope, therefore, that the labors of a special survey party will be continued during the ensuing summer."

That was in February, 1877, showing that as far back as the summer previous, that is to say, the summer of 1876, the hon. gentleman had commenced the special survey. And what was the answer of the hon. gentleman? He gave an answer apposite to the question, not only saying that there would be surveys, but that the surveys would be made according to the holdings of the people. This is what the hon. gentleman wrote upon that occasion:

"The programme of the special survey party provides for the work being extended during the coming season to intersect the Saskatchewan in the vicinity of the principal settlements on that river. It is proposed in all cases where settlements have been formed along the rivers in the territory to adapt the surveys to the farms as existing, that is to say, giving a frontage of 10 or 20 chains on the river, and running the lots back so as to give 160 acres."

That was the policy of my hon. friend (Mr. Mills) in 1877, which had been inaugurated even in the previous year. But I admit this: the people were impatient. The surveys could not proceed as rapidly as they desired, and the reason is given in the papers brought down to-day. The surveys could not be proceeded with because the meridian lines had first to be established. They again approached the Government upon this matter, and as my hon. friend stated—I need not give the authority, as it was quoted yesterday—that policy would have been pursued as speedily as could be permitted. But in 1878 there was a change of Government, and this I charge upon hon. gentlemen opposite, that with the change of Government came a change of policy as well, and that instead of henceforth respecting the holdings of the people, and having special surveys where settlements had preceded survey, they subjected the people whether their lands were settled or not, to the system of the rectangular survey. They sacrificed the peace of their country to the whim of having a uniform rectangular survey. Sir, when this new system of survey was first commenced, there were, as may be imagined, complaints in that territory. The people who had settled upon narrow front lots complained of that system, and as far back as March, 1882, Mr. Duck, the agent at Prince Albert, addressed this letter to the Department:

"As the majority of the settlers on the south branch of the Saskatchewan River, in the vicinity of the parish of St. Laurent, have taken up their lands previous to the survey with narrow frontages, similar to those river claims in other parts of the district, and in view of the difficulty

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likely to be experienced in this office in adjusting the boundaries of these claims, in accordance with the section survey, I have, at the request of the settlers so situated, the honor to request information as to the possibility of re-surveying these sections into river lots in a similar plan to that adopted in Prince Albert settlement."

That was on the 11th March, 1882, and on the 4th September, Mr. Duck had not yet received an answer from the Department; and not having received an answer to those complaints which he had sent to Ottawa at the request of the settlers, the settlers themselves tried their luck in the matter. They petitioned the Government in these words:

"We desire also that you should give orders that the lands should be surveyed along the river in lots, 10 chains wide and two miles long. That is the old usage of the country to divide the lands in this manner, and it would facilitate us in knowing the boundaries of our respective lands."

Then on the 13th of October, an official answer came from the Department of the Interior stating as follows:—

"But as regards the surveying of the land in question that all lands in the North-West Territories will be surveyed according to the system now in force."

That was the policy adopted and promulgated by the Department of the Interior on the 13th October, 1882, that henceforth all lands should be surveyed in the North-West Territories on the new system no matter whether they were occupied or not, or whether they were settled or not. On the 21st of October, Mr. Burgess, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, at last answered the letter of Mr. Duck which had been written on the 11th of March previously, and this is what he said:

"... It is not the intention of the Government to cause any re-survey to be made. Of course, any sub-division, differing from the regular survey, they may desire, they can procure for themselves when the lands come into their possession. You will please, therefore, communicate this decision to the persons interested."

When the settlers asked to have the surveys made according to their holdings the answer was peremptorily: no, you will tell the people that if they want their lands sub-divided afterwards, they can do so, but henceforth the system of survey will be that adopted by the Government. I ask any man in this House, I ask any impartial man, could there be any more vexatious tyranny than that which was thus exercised by the Government, over the people of the Saskatchewan River, who had laid out their land in narrow lots, who had built their fences accordingly, who had placed their houses accordingly, who had tilled the soil, and made improvements accordingly—could there be any more vexatious tyranny than that exercised by the Government when they came forward and ran their lines upon these holdings, irrespective of the possession of the people, or the improvements they had made? Could there be any greater tyranny than running their lines across a man's farm and his buildings, as if these lands were unoccupied or unsettled upon? That was a piece of tyranny without excuse. I say there can be no excuse whatever for the course of the Government in that matter. I say it would have been cheap justice in their hands if they had listened to the prayers of the half-breeds and told them: we will respect your possessions such as you have them. Not only so, but the missionaries of the land, the men of peace, who as a rule in that country do not interfere with the peoples' business, so far as that goes, thought it their duty to remonstrate time and again. Father Leduc came here and interviewed the Government; Father André wrote letters, and Father Vègreville wrote letters, which were quoted by my hon. friend,—as eloquent letters as could be written, letters which were pleading for the just rights of the people, but they remained unanswered. It is asked what are the grievances of the people of the North-West Territories? I ask any man, could there be a greater grievance, even in the old Provinces of Canada, than that the Government should attempt to re-survey the lands according to a new, regular and scientific system. I say that if such a thing