

view to the settlement of those land claims. They had the opportunity of knowing when they came in that these matters were then exciting some interest in the North-West, because in the report of a public meeting, held in 1873, there appears a petition which was transmitted to the Government by Lieutenant-Governor Morris, and in that petition among the claims made was this:

"We also ask of you our Lieutenant-Governor, give us lands in compensation of our rights to the lands of the country as Metis."

That was in 1873, and yet until 1876 not one single step was taken by the hon. gentlemen for the removal of those difficulties and the granting of those claims to those people as half-breeds. It was on the 19th of June, 1876, that the Government took its first action, and at that time they asked Mr. Matthew Ryan, then a stipendiary magistrate, to deal with the question. On the 23rd of October, of the same year, four months afterwards, Mr. Donald Codd, Dominion lands agent, telegraphed to Ottawa as follows:—

"Ryan never received instructions referred to in your letter 12th July. Important that he should be authorised to act by telegram."

So that after, in June of that year, pretending to take that question up, it was not until they were urged to it by their agent in Winnipeg, four months afterwards, that they took the first serious step in connection with it. Two days afterwards Mr. Donald Codd sent a telegram to Ottawa as follows:—

"Ryan anxious to know on what authority he acts. He thinks old commission has expired. Is it intended to keep result of half-breed allotment strictly confidential?"

The answer to that statement was as follows:—

"To MATTHEW RYAN,

"The acting Minister requests you, if willing to take such additional duty, to continue to take evidence of claimants to half-breed lands or to scrip who may come before you in North-West Territories. On reply, forms will be sent."

Now, Sir, Mr. Ryan appears to have accepted the commission entrusted to him. He entered on his duties, but on the 3rd of March, 1877, being then engaged in the performance of his duties as stipendiary magistrate and those supplementary duties connected with the half-breed claims with which he was charged, he wrote rather a remarkable letter, the full text of which I shall read to the House:

"SWAN RIVER, 3rd March, 1877.

"DEAR SIR,—In the matter of my continuing the half-breed lands investigation, as the only official communication I hold on the subject is a telegram authorising me to take the evidence of claimants who may come before me in the North-West Territory, would you kindly inform me, as soon as possible, whether it was the intention of the Department that I should put myself in communication with half-breed claimants by visiting the localities in which they reside, or that I should act in their behalf as they might casually come before me in the course of the discharge of my magisterial duties? If the latter were the intention, I fear that no early practical good can be effected. The greater number of the half-breeds of the different settlements can only be met at certain periods, before their departure to hunt, and after their return, and I am not aware at present at what period or periods I am likely to be engaged as a magistrate at these respective places. My apprehension is, that to trust to the coincidence of our thus meeting would be to defer the investigations indefinitely, and ultimately to cause many of the half-breeds and others in the Territory the loss of the benefits intended for them by law. Would it not be well, therefore, for me to make special endeavors in their behalf during the coming seasons of spring and autumn? I can conveniently go to Lac Qu'Appelle in May, where, as I am advised by Mr. McLean, agent of the Hudson Bay Company, and by the Catholic curé, the bulk of the half-breeds can be met between the middle of that month and the 10th or 15th of the next. And later I may be able to visit the Scotch settlement of Prince Albert, and the French of St. Laurent, and so on. I am not informed, either, as to the matter of expenses, but presume they are to be paid under authority of the Department of the Interior. Would you please instruct me on this head, and generally on the subject of the latter, at your earliest convenience, and believe me to be.

"Very truly yours,

"MATTHEW RYAN.

"D. Codd, Esq., Winnipeg."

That letter was dated on the 3rd of March, 1877, and in a postscript he says:

"P.S.—I would require no secretary or assistant, and would otherwise be careful of cost.—M. R."

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell).

Now, Sir, there was a pleading letter from the commissioner appointed to enquire into the half-breed claims; there was the deliberate statement on his part with a knowledge of the country, with a knowledge of the habits of the people, with a knowledge of the localities where they might be found most readily, that unless he was permitted to go to particular localities and meet them and give them notice of his being there, the work with which he was entrusted must result in no advantage to the half-breeds, and consequently must result disastrously. And yet, Sir, what was the answer given to that letter by the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), who at that time was Minister of the Interior. Here it is, written in his own handwriting across Mr. Codd's letter enclosing that of Mr. Ryan:

"It is not necessary to look up parties who have claims. If they care for their interests they will themselves come forward and establish their claims.—D. M."

That, Sir, was the spirit in which the hon. gentleman, who, with his friends, is so solicitous about those half-breeds, who complained that they had not been treated as they should have been treated—that was the spirit in which he dealt with the supplicating letter of his own commissioner, asking that he might be permitted to visit the half-breeds and deal with them as he there found them. But that is not all. Mr. Ryan appears to have been most solicitous in the matter, and he did, at his own expense as it turned out, go to Lake Qu'Appelle with a view of meeting some of the half-breeds there, and when he sent in his bill for \$75 to pay his expenses the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), then Minister of the Interior, refused to pay these expenses, and they were only paid after the present Government came in and the present First Minister was Minister of the Interior. That is the way in which hon. gentlemen dealt with those questions. The letter, as I have told you, was submitted to the Minister. Very little appears to have been done in connection with the matter until the 24th of June, 1878, when Mr. David Laird, then Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, a gentleman who was, I believe, not in the best relations possible with the then Minister of the Interior, telegraphed as follows:—

"Observe Mr. Ryan's authority, investigate half-breed claims under order 14th June, 1876, lapsed. Recommend time be extended one year. He is now here. Applicants waiting answer."

On the 28th June, 1878, Mr. Ryan himself telegraphed from Battleford:

"Half-breeds pressing me. Will time of investigation be extended?"

And the answer was as follows:—

"Minister has subject under consideration, and will probably authorise Mr. Duck, who has been appointed Dominion lands agent for Saskatchewan, to investigate such claims."

And that, Sir, was about the last thing the hon. gentleman did in connection with the half-breed claims of the North-West. He appointed a commissioner, and when the commissioner told him what was absolutely necessary to be done, he refused to permit that to be done, and when the commissioner, acting on his own sense of what was right, did it, and incurred a little expense in doing it, he refused to pay that expense; and then, when the Lieutenant-Governor tells him first, and then the commissioner, that the half-breeds were there waiting, but that the authority of the commissioner had lapsed, the answer sent was that the matter was under the consideration of the Government, and that probably Mr. Duck, the newly appointed agent at Prince Albert, would be appointed to investigate those claims. And yet, with that record, these hon. gentlemen move resolutions such as that which has been moved to-day, and ask the condemnation of the Government by Parliament and the country, on the ground that they did not deal fairly, fully, quickly with these half-breed claims in the North-West. During that time it is well known that the importance of this matter was pressed upon the Government by the Hon. Mr. Laird. In