

them in that regard;—I cannot say. But our position is already set forth in the file, and I do not know that I can add anything to what is there shown. I want however to say this: That, as to encouragement given by the department to the transactions of these people, my hon. friend (Mr. Sam. Hughes) was good enough to read from the file the view which the department takes. We gave notice to these people; in order that they might have no opportunity to plead that they were taken unawares, we took the responsibility of definitely informing them as to what were the requirements of their contract and that they would be required to live up to that contract or they could not get the land. We did that for our own protection and for the protection of the public, as we understood it. And we refer to this letter as evidence that, at any rate, we were not encouraging this company in the idea that they could acquire this land except by fulfilling the agreement.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. With the minister's permission, I would like to ask a question. In 1900, when this agreement was made, it seemed probable that railway facilities or at least road facilities, would be provided for communication between Edmonton and the Yukon. Did it not seem as if they were taking advantage of the rush which had then begun to extend far beyond Edmonton? The minister knows as well as any one else that in every direction north and northwest, and even northeast for a hundred miles beyond Edmonton settlement has extended. There are settlers beyond Pembina, and even as far as Athabasca, following down the river to the north and north-east even beyond this tract of land. Would it not seem then, that these parties, in securing this concession, were actuated by a desire to take advantage of what they knew was coming, a rush of immigrants from all parts of the old world into the historic Peace river valley? And I ask: Is it fair to let these people hold these lands until they become worth several dollars an acre, without their doing anything, without spending a dollar except to send out a few circulars? Is it fair that these men, without taking any risk or doing any work, should get the benefit of the efforts of those who go in there making millions of dollars at the expense of the settlers?

Mr. OLIVER. Well, that is not the intention, as I think the file that the hon. gentleman has read and the remarks that I have made show.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. But does the minister intend to be firm about it?

Mr. OLIVER. That is the intention so far as we can express ourselves in the

Mr. OLIVER.

English language. I think the papers that have been read are all to that effect.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. But the grant is not cancelled.

Mr. OLIVER. I might perhaps, express myself more clearly, but not within the rules of the House. I want to emphasize the point that not at any time has there been any person deprived of an opportunity to settle on any of the land by the existence of this concession. And that is what is the matter with the company—they got land that nobody else seemed to want. That is where their trouble is, but it is not a trouble that concerns us.

Mr. T. S. SPROULE (East Grey.) There is another side of this question that has not been mentioned by the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver). The hon. gentleman started out by saying that we are not concerned whether this is a bad transaction or a good one. Is that the message to the House and to the world of the Minister of the Interior, the custodian of the lands of the Dominion of Canada that are yet unsold? It seems to me that that is a very strange statement for the minister to make. It is not in consonance with the principles of business management that might be expected of the government and the Department of the Interior in regard to these lands. When the concession was made, the Minister of the Interior of that day thought we were interested in this bargain. His report stated:

The minister states that he has satisfied himself of the bona fides of the company, and after giving the matter careful consideration he is of opinion that the application is one which it would be in the public interest to entertain.

And he recommends that the land be locked up for thirty years.

The minister, therefore, recommends that the tract of land applied for, containing about twenty-four square miles be reserved for a period of thirty years on the following conditions:

What are those conditions? They are that the company shall put a hundred settlers on the land within three years, and fifty more within five years—that is 150 within eight years. Eight years have passed, and how many settlers have they put on? Just four that have taken up homesteads—

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. And they went in themselves.

Mr. SPROULE. I assume that they went in themselves. And probably more would have gone in if the land had not been locked up. Yet, the minister thinks the question whether this is a good bargain or a bad one does not concern us. The report says, further: