

The PRIME MINISTER. You cannot avoid that.

Mr. FOSTER. The right hon. gentleman last year said he was going to correct the abuses that existed in the time of the preceding government, but his commissioners are simply paying out the scrip without any conditions attached to it at all. That shows what an immense farce the whole thing is. The idea was that in some way or other these half-breeds should be given lands or if they wished to go into stock or the ranching business they could be assisted to do so, but instead they have been given scrip payable to bearer. The half-breeds then part with the scrip for a song, and sometimes for worse than a song, to the speculators, who have followed on the track of these commissioners, and the result is that, in many cases, the half-breeds derive no benefit at all from this settlement. It does seem a pity that so much money should be spent to satisfy the just claims of the half-breeds and yet be spent in such a way that these people actually do not get the benefit. This plan of the right hon. gentleman, like many other plans of the government, was better in theory than in practice.

Mr. SUTHERLAND. I may say that the commissioners have made every possible effort to induce the half-breeds to take land scrip and they report that a much larger proportion of the half-breeds are taking lands than formerly.

The PRIME MINISTER. My hon. friend, the ex-Finance Minister, forgets what took place last year. The commission started with instructions to pay out scrip that was not transferable, so that the half-breeds would invest it in the purchase of land and not sell it to speculators. But, as was explained in the House last session, when the commissioners came to deal with the half-breeds—the commissioners were the Hon. Mr. Laird, a man of great prudence, Father Lacombe, a man who has been the friend of the half-breeds all his life,—I forget the names of the other members—the commissioners found that the half-breeds would take no other scrip but scrip similar to that which had been issued by the late government. They held meetings and notified the commission that they would not accept the scrip that was offered to them. They had been accustomed to have their scrip transferable and immediately convertible into money. The commissioners had to deliberate what they would do. They were ready to leave in the morning if their bills were not accepted. The Indians with whom we wanted to make a treaty were assembled, and the commissioners had to consider whether the Indians should be left to go back to their homes discontented or whether they should not meet their views and issue scrip as in former years. There is no man who

has taken a stronger view than Father Lacombe against the excesses resulting from issuing scrip, or who saw less benefit in its results to the half-breeds. But, in view of the determined attitude of the half-breeds he issued a report to the government that he had advised that the old system should be resorted to, and the scrip in the usual form issued. That was not the best way to deal with the half-breeds—we all admit that. But, after all, the commissioners came to the conclusion that it was better that the half-breeds should be satisfied, even though they do not derive the same beneficial results which would accrue to them if the new form of non-transferable scrip had been issued.

Mr. FOSTER. Land scrip?

The PRIME MINISTER. Yes.

Mr. FOSTER. There is no other, then?

The PRIME MINISTER. It entitles the holder, as I understand it, to pay it for its face value as cash upon any payment for Crown land. This year, I understand, the half-breeds were making use of the scrip in larger proportion than formerly for the purchase of their land, and thus we may suppose the half-breeds will receive greater benefit from this new issue of scrip than from former issues. At any rate, we shall have satisfied the claim of these men. They have always been discontented, feeling that the government of the country had not settled with them, had not given them their due. If we have gained nothing else, it will have been worth all the money that it cost the country. In 1870, after the rebellion, we issued scrip to the half-breeds, which was squandered, every dollar of it, I believe. But we gained this at any rate—that there were no more claims against us. We cannot afford to have a large section of the population of the North-west or any other part of the country feeling discontented and asserting that the government of the country has not given them what is their due. We must give them what is their own. If they squander it, so much the worse for them; if they profit by it so much the better; but at least, we get them satisfied.

Mr. SUTHERLAND. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) did not understand me when I used the expression commonly used in the department 'money scrip.' There are two kinds of scrip; one kind is good for 240 acres of land. That is the kind that I said the House would be glad to know the half-breeds were taking more generally. The other kind is transferable, and can be applied on the payment of any Crown lands by the holder of the scrip.

Mr. FOSTER. It is all redeemable in land, but some is transferable and some is not.

Mr. FOSTER.