

extent, in Nova Scotia are seldom inhabited by the bands to whom they belong, and in other sections of the country, particularly Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta, while the Indians permanently reside on the reserves, yet considerable portions of these are not used or occupied, and it is evident that it would be better for the Indian were these unoccupied lands disposed of and the money applied for the benefit of the band. Representations have been made to the department from time to time in the press, by ordinary correspondence and by members of parliament in the House and out of it that an effort should be made to secure the surrender of these lands in order that they may be sold, not only for the benefit of the Indians, but in order that an opportunity may be given to settlers to acquire these lands. Under the law as it now stands no portion of a reserve can be sold, alienated or leased without the consent of the Indians being first obtained under the provisions of the Act.

The Indian has evinced no very great desire to give up his land, one of the reasons advanced being that the money received from the sale thereof is kept by the department, very little of it spent on the reserve and only a small amount coming back to them by way of interest.

After making full allowance for the rights of posterity to share either in the land or the proceeds thereof it is considered advisable to increase the proportion that may be paid in cash from the proceeds at or about the time of surrender as an inducement to the Indians to consent to the department disposing of the unused portion of the reserve and thereby place in the market considerable quantities of land that may be made available for the benefit of the community generally.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—Do I understand the reasons given to imply that these lands cannot be disposed of without the consent of the tribe?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—They must agree to the surrender first.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—The first portion of the memorandum that the hon. gentleman read would lead to the conclusion that the government may take the power without the consent of the band.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—Oh, no.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—It gave reasons why power should be given to the government to sell these lands, and then afterwards it says it should be by the consent of the tribe. Do I understand that the only purpose is to give the Indians the 50 per cent instead of 10 per cent now given them?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—Yes.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—Is that to be divided among the members of the tribe or to be used for the improvement of lands? The latter portion I concur in, because it is much better that the land should be sold than left in the hands of tenants. I am speaking now of Indian lands in the county where I reside. How Indian reserves in the far west are affected I do not know, but I know there are very valuable lands in the Mohawk reserve which would be better sold and in the hands of owners than remain as they are to-day occupied by tenants. Most people know how tenants, as a rule, use lands. Do I understand that the only purpose of the Act is to give the Indians a larger proportion of the money than they now receive?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—That is the whole object.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—There is no indication how that 50 per cent is to be disposed of. Is that left to the tribe?

Hon. Mr. WATSON—I know there is some necessity for this legislation. For instance in Manitoba the Indian inspector was instructed to try to make arrangements with the Indians to surrender part of their reserve, and they decidedly objected, because the amount they were to receive was so small, and they could not appreciate the benefit of the interest later on, and some arrangement had to be made to throw that land open. Hon. gentlemen will understand that large reserves were made for the benefit of the Indians, which are not occupied by them. One reserve, the Rosseau, a portion of which was surrendered a short time ago, was sold by the government to the highest bidder, and a large sum of money was placed to the credit of the Indians, much to the benefit of the municipality in which the land was situated. I know of other