

March 31, 1873

country. This forty square miles of country at present supplies him with his food, clothing and his house. The smaller fur-bearing animals on it give him the means of acquiring what he needs of European manufacture. The moment he concludes a treaty for lands desirable for agricultural or railroad purposes, but two courses are open to him, either to remain and starve where once he revelled in plenty, or to totally change his habits and adopt those of the incoming race in wresting from the soil a substance.

The idea that he can do the latter on a payment of three dollars annually is, of course, an absurdity, the glaring nature of which is all the more apparent when we consider that when we have brought him within the pale of civilization we compel him to pay about six dollars annually to the State on the tobacco he smokes, the tea that he drinks, and the blankets and clothes that he wears. The proposition is an absurdity. We take from him his heritage in the Saskatchewan valley and we compel him to contribute six dollars yearly towards the State and we magnanimously propose to pay him three dollars a year for life.

Our laws declare him an owner, and yet we drive as hard a bargain with him as though he were a land jobber; and when other arguments have failed to make him accept the terms, we plainly give him to understand, in a spirit of civilized barbarity, that might is right, and that we will have his land. Any qualms of conscience on our part is apt to be satisfied by platitudes about the march of civilization, and the denomination of the Anglo-Saxon, judiciously forgetting that it is not so many hundreds of years ago that our British ancestors bore about the same relations to their Roman invaders that the Indian bear to us, and that we think quite proper, nay even heroic, their having opposed their naked and tattooed breasts to the advance of the well-armed Romans.

To me, it seems, Sir, that there is only one course open. We must civilize the Indian by weaning him from the chase to the cultivation of the soil. I know that the Americans, after immense appropriations of money to that end, have come to the conclusion that this is impossible; but, Sir, I am proud to say that we have a direct consideration of their proposition in the numerous settlements of Christian Indians about our missions, where the Indian nature has so far changed as to make him in point of industry, of truthfulness, and of obedience, the equal if not the superior of the average white man.

We are bound by the transfer to protect the Indians of the Northwest. They are consequently at this moment the wards of the Government, while it will be the easiest thing in the world, by the adoption of an unwise policy to sow the seeds of an everlasting enmity. Yet I hold that it is equally possible, by wise measures, to retain their friendship, even while we are taking their lands—that, in fact, we can economize him, if I may be allowed the expression, while we are protecting him.

To do this, I hold that treaties must be made with them on a far more liberal basis than those of 1871. Instead of perpetual annuity, I

would suggest a much larger sum annually for a stipulated period, say twenty-one years. Instead of a payment in money, I would be in favour of giving him indispensable articles of European manufacture of growth, and of stipulating that a very large proportion devoted to each band on a reservation should be applied to the purchase of agricultural implements, and the payment of native farmers competent to instruct them in cultivating the earth. Instead of the present reserve of 160 acres among a family of six, I would suggest 160 acres to each individual, and stipulate that the reservation should be situated near some well-known fishing ground, and be as far removed as possible from centres of the white population and much-travelled highways.

And lastly, I would expressly stipulate that the most ample provision be made for his education in our language. If sensible gentlemen feel that to do this would entail too great a tax on the finances of the country, I would respectfully suggest that a reservation of one section out of each surveyed township as in the case of school lands would, by its sale at a time when its value had been enhanced by contiguous settlement, provide a fund which would materially lessen the amount necessary to be appropriated for the Indian Department. A change from the policy which dictated the treaties of 1871 I hold to be actually necessary.

I would regret much to be considered an alarmist, yet I declare from my place in this House my conviction based upon knowledge of the feelings of the Indians, that no more treaties can be made with them on those terms; and it is a question whether, till the existing dissatisfaction of the bands already treated with be dissipated, they will make a treaty at all.

I hear it rumoured with a very great deal of satisfaction that the Government propose to manage the Indian affairs of the Northwest mainly in Manitoba, and that, instead of one Commissioner, there will be a board of three, one of whom will be the Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. If so, this is a step in the right direction, and I would earnestly suggest that this Board take early steps to enquire into the existing causes of dissatisfaction among the Indians who made the treaties of 1871.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM said he wished to make a few remarks on the motion before the House. This restlessness amongst the Indians was attributed to various causes.

First of all there was transition from British to Canadian rule. This they did not comprehend. Colonial relations, as we understand them, were utterly strange to them. Hitherto they had lived on British territory and, so they considered, under British protection; but they were left alone, their hunting ground free to them to roam over when and where they chose; they followed the buffalo on it, and when starvation stared them in the face, as often it has done, they had always a *dernier ressort* in the Hudson Bay Company to fall back upon; but now things were altered.

They heard of the white man coming in from Canada to take possession of their lands, to drive away buffalo and exterminate