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# THE ADMINISTRATION OF INDIAN AFFAIRS IN THE NORTH-WEST.

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No fouler blot is to be found on the fair fame of Canada than the disgraceful administration of Indian affairs in the North-West, with Sir John Macdonald as the chief head of that branch of the public service. The reports of the department are eloquent with statements of wrongs done to the Indians, promises broken, violated Treaties, and the shameful misconduct of those appointed to official positions in the North-West; all furnishing proofs that cheating and robbing the Indians had been reduced to a science.

Instead of men of high moral standing, truthfulness and honesty being chosen to preside over the Indians of the North-West, the Government selected from a swarm of camp followers those who were unfit for positions of respectability in the older Provinces, and who have since proved themselves to be dishonest, untruthful and grossly immoral.

The public accounts show over \$1,100,000 charged annually to Indian affairs, but a very large proportion of that amount finds its way into the pockets of the hordes of official thieves who have been placed in responsible positions by the government.

Flour furnished by the contractors has been stigmatized in official reports as "stinking." Trowsers and shirts have been supplied "which were inferior and worn out in three or four days." (*See Official Report of G. McPherson, Indian Agent.*) Mr. McColl, Inspector of Agencies, says of the seeds furnished for the Indian farms, "The potatoes and barley were half rotten."

Mr. Herchemer, in his report of 1883, says, "A great deal of sickness has visited them lately, caused by the want of fresh meat. The Indians, under treaty 4, received in 1884-5, \$15,290.92 worth of pork, and \$1,288.45 worth of beef, although it is known that beef is life to the Indian of the plains, while salt pork is disease and death to him." For the salt pork the officials paid 20 to 25 cents per pound, and they could have procured all the fresh beef required for 8½ to 15 cents per pound.

In 1883-'84-'85, the Indians under Treaties Nos. 4, 6 and 7, with a total population of 12,102, and partially cultivating 4,614 acres, are charged with agricultural implements and tools amounting to the sum of \$87,444, or \$189 for implements for every acre cultivated. It is an outrage on common sense to ask any one to believe that those implements ever reached the Indians. A wilful misapplication was made of the money by the officials. The Indians were defrauded and the country was robbed. The Public Accounts and Indian Reports are teeming with such charges.

Priests and Protestant ministers have repeatedly called the attention of the Government to the immoral practices of their officials, and to the open manner in which young Indian girls, of from 13 to 16 years of age, are sold to white men at from \$10 to \$20 each, into a life that is worse than death, but the Government has as repeatedly refused to interfere.

The Electors are asked to stamp with their disapproval the policy of an administration under which is flourishing such disgraceful conduct in the Indian affairs of the North-West.

An evidence of the Christian sentiment of the Country on this subject can be secured from a perusal of the following extract from the published minutes of the late General Presbyterian Synod.

At the late Session of the General Presbyterian Synod, held at Hamilton, in June, 1886, the following utterances were made in relation to the treatment of the North-West Indians by Government Agents.

Rev. Principal Cavan moved:—

“That the General Assembly, whilst disclaiming all political party aims, feels bound to give expression to its convictions regarding the treatment of the Indians in the North-West by the Dominion of Canada. No judgment is here expressed on our general policy towards the Indians, and the meritorious character and services of many servants of the Government in the Indian Department are gladly recognized; but it seems to be established by irresistible evidence that in too many instances a people who are wards of the Government are being wronged and defrauded by those who are specially appointed to care for them and promote their interests; whilst flagrant immorality is too often chargeable upon public servants, as well as upon traders and other whites who come much in contact with the Indian population. Thus the mis-

sionary efforts of the Churches are counteracted and hindered, many sufferings brought upon the Indians, and a state of disaffection towards the Dominion is even, to some extent, engendered. The General Assembly would earnestly recommend to the Government of Canada the imperative necessity of at once cancelling all appointments of agents and instructors who are known to be tyrannical, unjust or immoral, and of filling their places with men of integrity, sobriety, and purity. Further, the Presbyterian Church pledges itself, as far as may be in its power, to co-operate with the public authorities in promoting the social improvement and the temporal well-being of the Indians, whilst, in common with other Churches, seeking to bring them under the holy influence of the Christian religion.

"A copy of this resolution, signed by the Moderator and Clerks of the General Assembly, shall be respectfully transmitted to the hon. the Minister of the Interior and to the Superintendent-General of Indian affairs."

Speaking to his motion, Rev. Principal Cavan, said that the Church had to take cognizance of the whole moral province, and while keeping away from party politics, it nevertheless would not keep silence on a point where morality was concerned. Was there any grievance in regard to the Indians of the North-West? After giving the matter the most thorough investigation and obtaining a large amount of information, not from party sources, he had come to the conclusion that there was. There had been heated discussions in the Parliament of Canada on this question. As a minister of Christ who was interested in these people, he had read these discussions. Very serious charges had been made by the Opposition, to which the Government had replied ably, as they always did. But he did not base his arguments on any of the evidence of politicians, and there was abundance of evidence to prove his point. There was the speech of the Rev. Hugh McKay the other evening. And there were the letters and freely expressed opinions of their esteemed Superintendent, the Rev. Hugh Robertson, with whom they and all were familiar. (Applause.) Mr. Robertson had made indictments against the Indian Agents such that no Government which had a proper sense of self-respect would wish to be passed over without investigation. The Presbytery of Brandon had made a non-political deliverance on the matter, as also has done the Senate of the North-West. Rev. Dr. King had also spoken out. The testimony of these bodies and individuals was uniform, and it was to the effect that while there were some men among the Indian agents who were gentlemen, and men of high Christian character, nevertheless, there were many who were

treating the poor Indians with shameful cruelty, defrauding them in the doling out of provisions, and irritating them by treatment which he could not describe. He could not say what proportion of the agents were censurable, but they were, he was grieved to say, too many. The resolution did not say anything in regard to putting any Government out of power. The sight of a great nation, strong as we were, going out to destroy these poor creatures was a sad one, and if a nation which was capable of spending \$5,000,000 to do these poor creatures an injury would not do its best to redress their grievances, that nation was not fit to live. He was not going to take up the difficult question of the necessity of party politics, but he would say, that party politics, as at present constituted and under present circumstances, contained some things which were very repugnant to the feelings of a Christian man. (Applause.)

Rev. Robert Hamilton seconded the motion, giving his experience of the ill-treatment of the Indians.

Rev. Mr. Ball spoke of the gross immorality which was introduced among them by depraved whites. He said that Sir H. Langevin, when the matter had been brought up in the House, had refused to acknowledge the responsibility of the Government for the wrong doings and immoral conduct of their agents. He had been very much surprised to hear such a statement from the hon. Minister, and could not realize that the Government would take such a position in regard to the matter.

Principal Grant:—We are doing a very solemn act, and we should all deliberately endorse or approve of this motion by all rising in attestation of our own feelings on the subject. I feel that we have been guilty of a national sin, and if we do not repent we will be punished as a nation, and a worse thing will come upon us if we do not mend our doings.

The resolution was carried unanimously by a standing vote.

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To that representation, like many others that have been forwarded to them, the Government paid no attention whatever.

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In the administration of the Indian affairs of the North-West, Sir John Macdonald has appeared thoroughly indifferent except to have positions of emolument provided for dishonest and immoral officials, whose acts have proved the most serious obstacle in the way of the efforts of missionaries to christianize the Indians of that territory.