

MEMORANDUM

Relative to the proposed Bill, that the Leases of the Indian Lands in the Township of Dundee, be, upon payment of a limited commutation, converted into purchases.

The lands in question were set apart, upwards of fifty years since, for the benefit of the Iroquois Band of Indians, settled at St. Regis, and comprised, according to Deputy Surveyor McCarthy's Map, dated 15th April, 1809, exclusive of the marsh meadows in front, about 18,650 acres. The Indians have a village in which is a substantial church facing upon the St. Lawrence, and cultivate small patches of garden ground attached to their log-houses. A few live upon the islands adjoining, and cultivate a much larger surface than those resident in the village have now the opportunity of doing.

With regard to the farm lands in the township of Dundee, possession of almost the entire quantity has been assumed by white persons, to whom leases at a little more than a nominal rent, namely \$5 per annum, have been granted of each 100 acres.

The leases are for periods of two durations; the longer ones for 99 years, the shorter leases for 30 years.

The earliest of the long leases date in 1819, and are 77 in number, as reported by the Agent, Mr. Colquhoun.

The earliest of the shorter leases is dated in the year 1822, and extending up to the year 1857, are 33 in number, according to a Schedule furnished in April, 1863, by Mr. Sutherland Colquhoun, the agent.

It is proper here to state, that a number of the tenants are in arrear for rent, and in the event of the sanction of the Legislature being given to the long leases being converted into purchases, a condition should be inserted that all arrears must be first paid.

The altered condition of the Indians, arising from the progress of settlement, renders it very desirable that provision should be made for their becoming—by offering facilities for it—agriculturalists. So large a proportion of the St. Regis lands have from time to time been taken possession of by white persons, as now to interfere with the Indians pursuing, much as they might individually desire it, the avocation of agriculturalists.

This is mainly owing to the indifference manifested by those who, in times past, had the charge of their affairs, as to how they subsisted, provided they did not evince serious discontent.

The prospects and future of the Indians have however undergone a decided change, and having now neither the annual presents, which used to contribute largely to their comfort, nor their hunting grounds to depend upon, their main subsistence must henceforth be, like that of people of other origins, drawn from the soil.

These obvious facts establish the necessity for devising, in connection with the management of the lands reserved for them, such plans as shall enable the Indian Department to promote agriculture, and thus induce habits of industry, thriftiness and comfort. It is the want of occupation, and the indolence which it engenders, which induces intemperance and demoralization among the Indian as well as the white populations.

In visiting, in the early part of last summer, the St. Regis Indians, I at once perceived the injustice they had suffered by the encroachments of the white settlers upon their lands. By little and little they had been forced back until, with the exception of the small parcels of land within the village, which they cultivate as garden ground, they had scarcely any land to cultivate.

This state of things calls for a remedy, and the remedy I propose is the restoration to them, as the shorter leases fall in, of the lands which they cover.

Concerning the duty of using every means for raising the Indian character, and of fitting those people for eventually taking their place in the ranks of their fellow subjects, there can be no question. Landowners as they are, the avocations marked out for them are scarcely less distinct than the duty of providing for their permanent welfare, and by maintaining a spirit of industry, pave the way for improving their social, moral and intellectual condition.

I would accordingly suggest, that if Parliament intervenes in respect to the leased lands in the St. Regis Reserve at Dundee, the leases for 99 years be the only ones which the measure shall affect, and with regard to them as the principal which a rental fixed (in some cases upwards of forty years since), and in some instances under doubtful authority, would in no way represent the value of the land at present, if estimated as in an unimproved condition, it is submitted whether the Indians would not suffer injustice were the nominal rent of \$5 per annum for each 100 acres fixed as the basis of a commutation.

(Signed)

W. SPRAGGE,
D. S. I. L.

INDIAN DEPARTMENT,
18th March, 1864.

2nd Session, 8th Parliament, 27 Victoria, 1864.

MEMORANDUM

Of Mr. Spragge, relative to Indian Lands,
Dundee.

Ordered, by the Legislative Assembly, to be
printed, 10th March, 1864.

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(Mr. SOMMERVILLE.)

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