CLIFFORD SIFTON AND CANADIAN INDIAN ADMINISTRATION 1896-1905

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ABSTRACT. This paper attempts to examine Canadian Indian policy during an important transitional phase. It was apparent that the reserve system was not leading to the rapid assimilation or acculturation of the native peoples, while a stabilizing population meant that the Indians were not simply going to disappear. Under Clifford Sifton the Laurier government overhauled the Indian administration to centralize it, improve efficiency and reduce costs in the areas of salaries, education, medical care, rations, annuities, and the like. Pressure on the Indians to abandon old tribal customs, accept the values of the dominant society, and become self-supporting agriculturalists was sharply increased. Preoccupied as he was with promoting western development, Sifton had little time and few new ideas for Indian administration; most policy initiatives were generated from within the department. But the people whom Sifton put in positions of authority were unsympathetic to the plight of the Indians and had little contact with them. Thus the way was prepared for Sifton's successor, and sharp critic, Frank Oliver, to pursue an aggressive policy of forced acculturation and grasping of Indian lands, particularly in response to demands from the rapidly settling West.

RESUME

Cette étude essaie d'examiner la politique Indienne du Canada pendant une phase de transition très importante. Il était apparent à cette époque que le système des réserves n'aboutissait pas à une assimilation rapide ou à une acculturation des Amérindiens, alors que la stabilisation de la population signifiait que les Indiens n'allaient pas, tout simplement, disparaître. Sous Clifford Sifton, le gouvernement Laurier réorganisa l'administration indienne pour la centraliser, améliorer son efficacité et réduire les frais dans le domaine des salaires, de l'éducation, des soins médicaux, des rations, des rentes, et autres. Il y eut un accroissement radical des pressions sur les Indiens pour leur faire abandonner les vieilles coutumes tribales, accepter les valeurs de la société dominante et devenir des agriculteurs indépendants. Bien qu'il se préoccupât de promouvoir le développement de l'Ouest, Sifton ne consacrait que peu de temps et n'avait que peu d'idées en ce qui concerne l'administration indienne; la plupart des initiatives pour les lignes de conduite venaient de l'intérieur du ministère. Mais les gens placés par Sifton dans des postes de direction n'avaient que peu de sympathie pour la situation des Indiens et avaient peu de contacts avec ceux-ci. La voie était ainsi tracée pour le successeur de Sifton, et aussi son critique, Frank Oliver; il n'avait qu'à suivre une politique aggressive d'assimilation culturelle forcée et d'appropriation des terres indiennes, surtout pour répondre aux demandes de l'Ouest en pleine colonisation.

"The Indians," observed Clifford Sifton in December 1896, "were the wards of the government and when he settled down to work he would see that we either had more Indians to look after or less officials, for at present there were nearly as many officials as Indians."[1] Undoubtedly an appreciative ripple of applause and laughter flowed through his attentive audience of Liberal supporters. Sifton recently had been appointed Minister of the Interior and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in the Laurier government, and was on a speaking tour of the West before assuming his duties in Ottawa. That Sifton's remarks merely reflected conventional wisdom among

Liberals is scarcely surprising, for his main concern was with the Interior department, and with western development generally.

There appears to be little evidence that Sifton ever had anything but the most casual interest in Indian affairs before being called to Ottawa. He did recall the events of 1885 when, as a member of the home guard in Brandon, he had paraded "the street with a six shooter and a shot gun four or five evenings in succession,"[2] but he did not seem to have been profoundly affected by the Indian and Métis uprising. In 1882, aged only twenty-one, he had begun to practice law in Brandon, and was elected to the provincial legislature in 1888. In 1891 he entered the Greenway government as Attorney General where he gained provincial and national notoriety as the able defender of Manitoba's "national" school system. Sifton's great talents as an organizer, administrator and politician were very evident by 1896 when Laurier made him the youngest member of his cabinet and placed him in charge of western development.

Indian Affairs had long been closely associated with the Department of the Interior, which was the principal instrument through which the federal government attempted to implement its developmental policies for the prairie West. The Dominion authorities were charged with responsibility for all of Canada's Indians, but it was the prairie Indians who created the greatest problems for the government, and to whom the government had the most obligations. Indian Affairs was still a branch of the Department of the Interior when most of the numbered treaties were signed in the 1870's. Although created a separate department in 1880, it thereafter normally retained its association with the Department of the Interior by coming under the aegis of the Minister of the Interior until 1936. Thus the Indians were viewed always in the context of western development; their interests, while not ignored, only rarely commanded the full attention of the responsible minister.

Sifton illustrates these problems well. There is plenty of evidence of his desire to serve what he believed to be the best interests of the Indians. Yet he shared some pretty conventional prejudices and misconceptions about them, was heavily influenced by his officials and always had an eye on the political repercussions of his policies. He further obscured the already hazy separate identity of Indian Affairs by placing it and the Interior department under a single deputy minister. During Sifton's tenure, furthermore, the national budget more than doubled, the Department of the Interior budget nearly quintupled, but that of Indian Affairs increased by less than 30%.[3] The fact was that the government—and, indeed, Parliament—had an unvaryingly parsimonious attitude toward the Indians.

By 1896 the western Indians had for some years been settled on reserves which, it was hoped, would serve both to protect and ulti-

mately to acculturate them. The general philosophy of the department, which Sifton shared, seemed to be that the Indians should be quietly maintained on reserves, where they should create as little political difficulty as possible. There they should be prepared for assimilation to white society, or at least become willing and able to achieve a state of economic independence. In the meantime, the government would act as a sort of guardian to prevent exploitation of the Indian, while the various leading Christian denominations were aided in the task of giving him a moral and general education. "Great progress" had been made in this direction, Sifton assured the House of Commons in 1901:

> In the organized portion of the country there is no Indian population that may be considered dangerous so far as the peace of the country is concerned. The Indians are becoming rapidly a peaceful population and self-sustaining. The expenditure we are making is very large, but it is made in the pursuance of a policy favoured by parliament for many years based upon a belief that it is better—aside from the justice of the question—to bring the Indians into a state of civilization or comparative civilization, than to take any chance of their becoming a disturbing factor in the community. Generally the results have been satisfactory.[4]

I

Upon arriving at Ottawa late in 1896 Sifton plunged into departmental reorganization. Indian Affairs had for years been a splendid source of patronage and sinecures for the Conservative party faithful, and Sifton was determined that Liberals would now share the spoils of power. Beyond that, the government was under much pressure to slash budgets because for years the Liberals had denounced the lavish spending of the Tories.[5] Sifton applied the knife to Indian Affairs as thoroughly as it was used on any department. Personnel were dropped, the western agencies reorganized, and salaries generally reduced.

The first and most serious battle which Sifton fought in order to bring about a thorough reorganization was to remove the deputies of the Interior and Indian Affairs departments, A. M. Burgess and Hayter Reed respectively, and to place both departments under a single deputy of his own choosing. Firing of deputies by an incoming minister was not accepted practice. Sifton was the only Liberal minister to do so and had to overcome opposition from within the Cabinet and from the Governor General.[6]

Placed over the two departments was a political ally from Brandon, James A. Smart. Like Sifton a former Ontarian who had moved west, Smart had operated a hardware business in Brandon, and served as Minister of Public Works and Provincial Secretary in the early years of the Greenway administration in Manitoba. He

certainly left his mark on the Department of the Interior, where he served until the end of 1904, but it is questionable how much influence he had on Indian Affairs. Under Reed even the trivial matters of the daily operation of the office were dealt with by the Deputy; under Smart, almost all letters went out over the signature of the departmental secretary, J. D. McLean.[7] Smart in fact dealt with only the more politically sensitive matters of general policy or patronage.

Of the Indian Affairs officials, Sifton worked most closely with James Andrew Joseph McKenna, a second-class clerk who was promoted to be the Minister's private secretary for the department.[8] In reality this was a highly political position. Through McKenna, Sifton probably had more input into departmental policy-making than is apparent from the written record, where he appears to have confined himself largely to making recommendations to the Governor General in Council, usually based on the advice of his officials. Furthermore, McKenna had Sifton's ear, and was placed in charge of some delicate and important activities, ranging from investigation of local squabbles over patronage, to treaty and halfbreed scrip commissions, to negotiations with the British Columbia government. From July 1, 1901, McKenna was Assistant Indian Commissioner and Chief Inspector for Manitoba and the North-West Territories.

Sifton did not institute these changes in order to effect any drastic new Indian policy. He was interested in efficiency and economy of operation, and in political considerations. Yet the changes were a wrench with the past, and prepared the way for more drastic changes in the future. Not only was Indian Affairs placed in a position inferior to the Interior Department, but the traditional policy-making structure was thoroughly shaken up. The new men had had little direct contact with the Indians, and most were relatively unsympathetic, if not "hard-line," in their attitudes.[9] Smart knew nothing of the Indians. Prior to going to Ottawa he was directed to familiarize himself with the western operations of the Department of the Interior; almost incidentally Sifton suggested that he also tour all the Indian schools in Manitoba.[10] McLean, thoroughly experienced in the operations at Ottawa, seems to have had little or no direct experience in the outside service. Despite his later fame in Indian Affairs, the chief accountant, poet D. C. Scott, had the outlook of an economizing bookkeeper, expressing concern for cutting costs, living within budgets, and demonstrating absolutely no sympathy for the realities of administration at the reserve level. Finally, as will be seen, McKenna had an uncompromising attitude which clearly found favour with the Minister.

Only in Manitoba and the North-West Territories could Sifton hope to effect significant savings. While perhaps less than one-quarter of Canada's Indians lived in this region, about three-quarters of the

Indian Affairs budget was expended there.[11] This was mainly because of government obligations contracted when the treaties were signed, to provide assistance in education and agricultural instruction, food for the destitute, annuities, and medical services. During the 1880's most Indians were settled on reserves, agents assigned to supervise and assist them, farm instructors and schools established to instil new ways and ideas.[12]

Necessarily the service had been somewhat decentralized in early years when communications were poor. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, located at Regina and the chief administrative officer in the West, had been empowered to make many vital decisions on the spot.

Shortly after his arrival in Ottawa, Sifton received from A. E. Forget, then Commissioner of Indian Affairs, a recommendation for a drastic restructuring of the western administration. It called for centralization of the administration at Ottawa, the removal of the Commissioner's office from Regina to Winnipeg, reduction of the Commissioner's staff from fourteen to three, the creation of six inspectorates (three in the Territories and three in Manitoba), and the closing down of several agencies.[13] Such a course had been suggested within the department as early as 1888, and again by the Royal Commission on the Civil Service of 1892, but had been rejected by the government.[14] The new Superintendent General, however, had little hesitation in approving the proposed changes with only slight modifications.[15] The basic effect was to change the Commissioner's office "very largely from a transmitting office to ... an inspectoral one."[16] That is, until 1897 the Commissioner's office was occupied principally with checking accounts and reports, a procedure which was repeated in Ottawa, and also was the instrument through which western operations were carried out. Such duplication of effort was henceforth to be substantially reduced, and the Commissioner was expected to occupy himself with overseeing the inspection of western agencies and schools, making recommendations and helping in the preparation of estimates for western operations. The agencies and schools were now to receive their directions mainly from Ottawa.

One of the expected benefits of this change was reduced manpower. The changes were drastic. When Sifton took over the department there were 144 employees; within two years some 57 had been dismissed or resigned from the North-West service alone.[17] Naturally there was not a proportionate decrease in the service because Liberals were appointed to many of the vacancies. In 1897–98 the department budgeted for 115 officers, and by 1904–05 it had increased to 133.[18] Still the reorganization, which resulted initially in dropping 29 officials, could be said to have been successful in effecting a reduction in the size of the department.

Closely associated with this was Sifton's decision to institute

widespread reductions in salaries for many of those fortunate enough to retain their positions. In 1896–97 the average annual salary was $712.33; in 1897–98 this became $683.32, or a drop of about 4%. The salaries of Indian agents had ranged up to $1400; all were to be cut to $1000 or $900. The salaries of departmental clerks were reduced, none to exceed $600. Farm instructors, who had drawn up to $600, were reduced to a range of $300 to $480.[19] Some in this way found their salaries reduced as much as $300, or 25%.[20] Undoubtedly these drastic reductions encouraged some employees to resign or seek superannuation; and it is unlikely that departmental morale was much improved. The department claimed a saving in salaries of $27,189 in the reorganization of the North-West service, but there was a gradual recovery in rates of pay, so that by 1904–05 the average was $725.67.[21]

Whatever the political benefits of a $27,000 saving in salaries, and of a flurry of dismissals and resignations, the Indian department budget continued to grow steadily.[22] The changes were instituted in the name of greater efficiency, which of course meant speed in bringing the Indians to self-sufficiency and ultimately assimilation.[23]

One change which did not last long, however, was the attempt to combine two departments under one deputy. The rapid expansion of immigration and settlement made the combined responsibility too heavy, and in 1902 the Indian department was again given its own Deputy Superintendent General. Sifton appointed Frank Pedley, a Toronto lawyer who had become Superintendent of Immigration in 1897. Although he had had no experience in Indian Affairs, Pedley had proven himself to be an excellent administrator, and would remain at his new post until 1913.[24]

The effectiveness of these administrative changes was debated rather heatedly within the department in 1904.[25] The evidence which emerged suggested they were probably justified, but that they had never been as effective as they should have been because of incredibly lax inspection procedures. Most agencies were inspected less than once a year, and several were well over two years between inspections. The inspectors were responsible for schools as well. Some had been overburdened, while others simply had not been doing their job.[26] With an average of four or five agencies and a few schools per instructor, there seems to be little reason why the inspections could not have been done at least once a year, if not every six months as recommended. But hard work was rarely demanded of most officials, whether in the outside service or at Ottawa.[27]

The administrative changes, in sum, did result in a slightly smaller staff and a lower cost in salaries. As an economy measure the effect was not marked, because most departmental expenditures were on items over which Sifton had little or no control: schools, annuities, feeding the destitute, and so forth. As an attempt at improving admin-

istrative efficiency the effect was marginal. But by centralizing control in the hands of the Ottawa bureaucrats, who were much more concerned with ledger books than difficulties on the reserves, the potential for a much more rigorous prosecution of departmental goals was created.

II

"Next to the solution of the problem of immigration to the Northwest, there is nothing that will add greater lustre to Mr. Sifton's administration than the solving of the problem of teaching the Northwest Indians to live like human beings."[28] Such was the opinion of the *Manitoba Free Press*, which claimed that an effective method of educating the Indians had yet to be devised. Few problems claimed as much time or money from the Department of Indian Affairs.

Once the last treaties were signed and the Indians largely settled on the reserves, the federal government faced the problem of how to fulfil its obligations to provide education to the Indians.[29] In 1879 Nicholas Flood Davin produced a report for the government which recommended continuation of existing mission schools and establishment of denominational industrial boarding schools on the American model.[30] The government, however, did not begin its experiment with industrial schools until 1884, and ignored Davin's strictures about the need for high salaries to attract good teachers and the dangers of allowing religious denominations a free hand. It established the principle of sharing the costs with various denominations (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist) which shouldered the major burden of running the schools. The result of parsimony, low standards, poor enforcement and inadequate inspection was both white and Indian discontent with the system.[31] Plainly it was substantially a failure.

Rigorous inspections and higher expenditures might have done something to salvage the situation. Neither was undertaken. As a result of the departmental administrative reorganization the position of school inspector was abolished, for a time at least, and the duties handed over to agency inspectors. Sifton was unequivocal that increases in education costs could not be contemplated: "... the expenditure upon Indians, and particularly upon Indian education, has reached the high water mark, and we must now look to reducing rather than increasing it in any way."[32]

"The object of Indian education," he explained, was "to try and get them to take care of themselves as rapidly as possible." The difficulty was greatest among the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, which were "the hardest Indians in Canada to deal with, because of the fact that they are the farthest removed from the ordinary type of the working-man. They are the hardest to get settled

down to work."[33] Indians educated for years seemed to revert quickly to the old ways once back on the reserves, and the sentiment was widespread that attempting to educate the Indians was a hopeless cause. Frank Oliver, the aggressive independent Liberal from Alberta, and Sifton's eventual successor, argued that educating Indians in industrial schools was self-defeating: "we are educating these Indians to compete industrially with our own people, which seems to me a very undesirable use of public money, or else we are not able to educate them to compete, in which case our money is thrown away."[34] Sifton scarcely disagreed. He believed that a highly specialized education was generally a waste of time. "I have no hesitation in saying—we may as well be frank—that the Indian cannot go out from school, making his own way and compete with the white man.... He has not the physical, mental or moral get-up to enable him to compete. He cannot do it."[35]

When Sifton first came into office, he seems to have believed that the goal of making the Indians "self-supporting citizens" could be achieved only "by persistent and patient effort along the lines followed in the past." The system which had evolved contained basically three kinds of schools. The first was the day school, the oldest and most widespread, but probably least effective, where poorly paid and usually underqualified teachers laboured with Indian children on or near reserves.[36] The second type was the boarding school, also on or near reserves, but where Indian children were more removed from the tribal atmosphere and given "a general and moral education." The third type was the industrial school, which was well removed from the reservations, and gave the most varied and specialized curriculum. The day schools were poorest in Sifton's view because "the Indian children are not removed from the surroundings which tend to keep them in a state of more or less degradation." The industrial school, by contrast, removed the child from the reservation and tried to make him competitive with whites, which the Indian was incapable of becoming. Besides, the cost of these schools was very high. The best solution, he concluded, would be to expand the number of boarding schools, "which would give not so great an amount of education, but a reasonable education, to a much larger number of Indian children, [and] the result would be better on the whole for the Indian population."[37]

That he believed he had made important changes in the system was the burden of Sifton's remarks to the House of Commons in 1904:

> My own belief is that the system of industrial schools as I found it in operation when I took office, is not the best, or the most effective, or the most economic way of improving the condition of the Indians. I thought the system adopted was an artificial system. I found that Indian boys and girls were being kept in these schools in some cases until they were 23, 24 and 25 years of age. The Dominion of Canada is not under any obligation to conduct a system of education for an Indian tribe, under which the education of each child becomes so expensive and so artificial.

> I put in force a rule that children were not to remain in the schools after the age of eighteen.... We have substituted a less elaborate system; a system of what we call boarding schools where a larger number of children can for a shorter time be educated more economically and generally more effectively. What we desire to do is not to give a highly specialized education to half a dozen out of a large band of Indians, but if possible to distribute over the whole band a moderate amount of education and intelligence, so that the general status of the band would be raised.[38]

During Sifton's term as Superintendent General there was no serious attempt either to reform the school system or to enforce attendance regulations. The number of Indian children registered in the schools grew slightly from 9,700 in 1896 to 10,000 in 1905, the average attendance rising over 7%.[39] He refused, however, to offer any inducements to Indian parents to send their children to school.[40] And he told the House of Commons that much of his time in the Indian Department was spent resisting demands for more money for schools. "Our position with reference to the Indians is this," he said: "We have them with us, and we have to deal with them as wards of the country. There is no question that the method we have adopted of spending money to educate them is the best possible method of bringing these people to an improved state." To those who objected that little progress was being made, Sifton countered with emphatic denial. He added that the schools were perhaps less efficient than white ones, because "you cannot press the Indian children as you can the children of white people, you cannot require so much from them." He also admitted the difficulty of getting competent teachers. In theory they were required to have a third-class certificate, but "when you pay $300 a year and send a young woman, or a young man, out to a lonesome place where there are no social advantages it is very difficult to get a competent teacher under those circumstances."[41] That $300 was less than half what teachers could expect to make in the city must have been known to most members of Parliament. Yet the chief criticism directed at Sifton concerned the rising cost of Indian education, not whether better salaries might secure better teachers.[42]

There was indeed a strong tendency within the department to blame the churches for the weaknesses and failures of the system. Wrote Inspector Martin Benson in 1903,

> The Indians do not appreciate the instruction in religion and manners their children receive at these schools. What would impress them would be a practical education that would fit them to earn their own living and assist them to better their condition. That they do not receive such an education is generally admitted.[43]

Religious and moral instruction was naturally of central importance to the churches. The government, on the other hand, wanted the Indians to receive a straightforward practical education leading to self-sufficiency. Departmental officials upbraided the churches for not

taking greater responsibility for placing graduates of the schools in jobs, for not securing fully qualified teachers, for teaching too much religion and not enough practical training for an agricultural life on the reserves. But churches then, as always, had limited funds and depended upon the government. The government, in its turn, refused to take the full responsibility.[44] The objective of Indian education was to change completely the moral and spiritual values of the primitive societies, a function widely regarded as properly the province of the churches.[45] Thus a continuing role in Indian education for the churches simply was not disputed.

If standards were not improved, nor attendance regulations enforced, the government still had made some important decisions. The industrial school was considerably diminished in importance. Some pressure was exerted to make Indian education more practical and relevant to life on the reservation. But, as will be seen, this was not always to be done through formal educational institutions; the schools had not been a great success, and the way was opened to consider alternatives.

III

The policy of the Department of Indian Affairs, wrote Deputy Minister Frank Pedley in 1904, was "to bring the Indians as near the status of the white man as can be and make them a moral, industrious and self supporting class."[46] This was a comprehensive purpose of which formal education could fulfil only a part.

Certain attitudes, however, tended to hamper the desired development. Rarely was the opinion of an Indian taken seriously unless corroborated by some white man. To one correspondent who was inquiring about Indian protests over a medical officer, Sifton replied that the Department found considerable difficulty in arriving at facts where the Indians were concerned. "That difficulty," he wrote, "is such that it is almost impossible for a person who has not had experience with the Indians to understand! It is possible for persons to get the Indians to sign almost any kind of statements, if a little excitement and agitation be got up beforehand, and we are unable therefore to rely to any extent upon written statements that come in signed by Indians."[47] This attitude was reflected time and again in departmental dealings with correspondence from local chiefs and petitions from Indian bands.

A similar attitude prevailed with respect to band funds. Theoretically interest from Indian trust funds was to be distributed to the tribes to promote a sense of responsibility and self-government. In practice the department was reluctant to release the money, and did so only for projects of which it approved. The reason, explained Hayter Reed, was that "the money distributed as interest is a positive

deterrent to individual improvement amongst the Indians; they learn to depend too largely upon these payments, and frequently they squander them...." Department policy forced the Indians to rely "upon their own resources," which "cannot fail to promote self-reliance."[48]

The government attitude was forcibly demonstrated when the government dismissed for political partisanship a doctor attending the Mohawk Indians of the Bay of Quinte Reservation. The gentleman in question not only was popular with the Indians, but had been paid entirely out of band funds. When the dismissal was protested by the Indians, they appealed first to the Department and then to the Queen. Governor General Lord Minto attempted to use his influence to correct what he viewed as an injustice, but was firmly rebuffed by Sifton:

> ...it is quite clear that the officials who are paid out of Indian funds are regarded as officials of the Department of Indian Affairs and are fully responsible to the Department in the same way as any other departmental officers and while the views of the Indians are properly considered whenever possible the right of the Indians to control the action of the Department is not under any circumstances recognized.... It is as Your Excellency remarks quite correct that the Indians have always looked upon Her Majesty as a final Court of appeal for any complaint which they may wish to make. As a matter of practice however the actual discharge of such functions has for many years been confined to recommending the representations which may be made by the Indians, to the careful attention of the advisers of the Crown.[49]

The paternal grip of the department was in no way to be relaxed. It was felt in innumerable ways, from everyday administrative trivia to issues of band politics. For years the department had assumed the power to depose chiefs who "retarded progress" on the reserves, and there seems to have been little hesitation in using it. One such headman, described as "Tom, alias Kah-pah-pah-mah-am-wa-ko-we-ko-chin" of Moose Mountain Agency, was said to have brought up his children "to think that any thing in the way of work at farming, cattle keeping or schools is not good for Indians," and his example therefore hindered progress on the reserve.[50]

It was indeed the hope of the Canadian government to change within a generation or two a nomadic hunting society into independent self-supporting agriculturalists. The reasons for the difficulty in making the transition were complex. Departmental planning was often poorly related to the realities of the local conditions and tribal attitudes. Not all farm instructors were either competent or conscientious. Tribal customs were deeply entrenched; and the point must never be forgotten that to change a society from a hunting to a settled agricultural existence meant fundamental adjustments in values and outlook. These could not be altered overnight.

At times the department seemed very far removed from the prac-

tical difficulties encountered upon the prairie reserves. It was proposed at one point to impose sheep raising upon the Indians, despite objections from Agents, farm instructors and Indians. But the deputy was convinced it would be good for the Indians, particularly the women: "In connection with this industry will be carding, spinning, and weaving of this wool, for there is no reason why the women, who are greatly in need of constant and useful employment, should not make all the cloth required by the Indians for wear."[51] It was an industry which understandably never seems to have succeeded.

Under Sifton the Indians encountered much greater pressure to farm for themselves. "I may say," wrote J. A. J. McKenna, "that I am convinced that the Indians can only be advanced through labour [that is, being taught, and even virtually forced, to grow grain and raise cattle] and that I propose doing what I can to hasten the day when ration houses shall cease to exist and the Indians be self-supporting. That day will never come if officers continue the system of handling Indians through bribing them with food."[52] The Indians were gradually taught principles of cattle breeding, were discouraged from concentrating on ponies, and were taught also the value of growing grain for profit. This paternalism, Sifton pointed out, was likely to be required for some time. But he did want the Indians to receive a practical agricultural education, and both Indians and farm instructors who were successful were encouraged by the department.

One of the farm instructors, for example, was being supported in an experiment in which several young Indian couples, graduates of the schools, were settled away from their tribes and urged to produce beyond their immediate needs, not sharing with the tribe, and keeping the profits for themselves. "As a matter of practice," stated Sifton, "one of the most serious difficulties in improving an Indian band is that just as soon as an Indian couple show an inclination to thrift and gather a little property around them, all their Indian relations think it is not necessary for them to work just in proportion as this couple is prosperous. Their relations take their supplies, and consequently they have no encouragement to accumulate property." He hoped more and more to see Indian school graduates settled separately, "where they can have [a] much higher type of civilized life than they could if they settled amongst the other Indians."[53]

The department's efforts did have some effect, nonetheless, and it could demonstrate some impressive figures showing agricultural progress amongst the Indians of the Territories. In later years Sifton believed that the system which he had initiated was working out very well.[54]

The department had also been engaged in breaking down tribal customs and structures in other ways. Particularly important was the question of tribal ceremonies and dances, crucial for the maintenance

and survival of the tribal entity. Shortly after Sifton assumed his duties at Ottawa, the British Columbia government appealed against the prohibition of the potlatch.[55] After investigation Sifton concluded that the prohibition was justified. The potlatch, he argued, had a demoralizing effect upon the Indians, and the consensus of those working amongst the Indians was that judicious or prudent enforcement of the law would cause no difficulty. A younger generation was rising to power, and was opposed to the customs. Finally, "the repeal of the law now... would be viewed by the Indians as an evidence on the part of the Government of weakness and vacillation and would produce disrespect and want of confidence in the source from which it emanates."[56]

The traditional discouragement of the sun dance among prairie tribes was also maintained. Although the dance was not proscribed by law, except where torture, mutilation or giving away of property was involved, the department opposed it because it meant that the Indians abandoned their farm work, left the livestock to starve, and so forth. The department was willing to allow dances involving no torture, no compulsion to attend, where children were not withdrawn from school, which had a fixed time limit, and on occasion provided that tribes or bands from other reserves did not attend. Of course all these qualifications precisely undermined the social and spiritual meaning of the dance to the Indian collectively.[57]

In 1902 Lord Minto toured the West and decided to take up the issue of the sun dance, which he believed was unreasonably prohibited.[58] The Governor General might have considered the dance to be harmless, but unfortunately the Indians for whom he was so concerned happened to be in the Qu'Appelle Agency under Indian Agent Graham, who ran a model agency from the point of view of the department. His methods, while firm, had made the Indians much more "progressive." Defending his prohibition of the sun dance at some length, Graham argued that the dances were one of the most important mechanisms of reinforcing tribal authority and of undoing all the work of years in the schools to "civilize" the Indians.[59] Once again Minto's appeal had fallen upon deaf ears.[60]

Apart from prohibiting or strongly discouraging a few such activities, the department took only limited action in the area of Indian morality. Revisions of the Indian Act in 1898 included some controls on immorality, particularly with respect to delinquent parents and parents of illegitimate children, who would no longer be eligible to receive the government allowances for their children.[61] The sale of liquor to Indians on reserves was stringently forbidden by the Indian Act, but the fact that only $500 was voted by the government to enforce the law in central and eastern Canada reflected a very limited concern with the problem. "It is hopeless," wrote J. D. McLean, "to expect

that this traffic with the Indians can be entirely suppressed."[62] Naturally drunkenness on the part of civil servants working with the Indians was not long tolerated.[63] On the reserves, however, the Indian Agent had considerable powers as prosecutor and judge in dealing with the alcohol problem. McLean commented,

> There are many reasons why it is often best to let the Agent exercise the powers conferred upon him by the Indian Act, to hear and determine such cases—as for instance the desire to avoid unnecessary trouble and expense, the fact that he is probably in the best position to weigh the value of Indians' evidence, and to judge as to the nature of the punishment likely to have the best effect upon individual culprits, and because the meting out of justice by the Agent direct, tends to instil proper respect for his authority.[64]

Sifton himself did not favour strong government initiatives, for he believed that the power of the law in enforcing morals was very limited. The government could discourage, but not prohibit, Indian camp meetings, he told one correspondent, and when they were held it could only "take all possible steps to preserve order and decorum." Before he introduced his amendments to the Indian Act of 1898 he commented, "The question of immorality among Indian women on reserves is one that the Department has made efforts to cope with, but it finds it very difficult to adopt any method that will wipe out the evil. The Department has gone to great lengths in procuring legislation with this end in view... but I fear that statutory enactments will be slow in effecting reform, and that we must place our hope mainly on Christianising agencies."[65]

Such complacency extended also to an area of vital concern to the Indians, that of medical attendance. Most of the western treaties included provision for such attendance as required by the Indians, a government responsibility which was extended in varying degrees to Indians across the country. It was beyond question that the standard of these services was poor. When Sifton took office the decline in the general Indian population was continuing, though it levelled off and began a slow recovery early in the twentieth century. Reports from Agents and others constantly made reference to the poor state of health of the Indians, a situation largely taken for granted by the government. For example, one of the problems which exercised the department was the high mortality rate among graduates of the industrial schools. The concern, however, was not with improving conditions, but with selecting healthier students so that the investment in their education would not be wasted.[66] In a scathing attack on conditions in the Territories a doctor from Macleod observed that the mortality rate among the Bloods and Piegans was "over *ninety* per thousand."[67]

The doctor's suggestions for reform were not followed up,

because as always the Members of Parliament were most concerned with reducing costs.[68] Sifton hoped to minimize costs by instituting a policy of paying a fixed stipend, rather than fees for actual attendance.[69] He claimed that it was a continual struggle to effect economy in medical expenses: "When an Indian gets medicine one day, he imagines he cannot get along unless he gets more the next, and there are bound to be increases from time to time, but we are doing the best we can to keep down the expenditure."[70] "You never can satisfy Indians that they are being properly attended to medically," he declared. "The more medical attendance that is provided the more they want."[71]

Mounting criticism was such that in 1904 Sifton appointed a "medical inspector of the Department of the Interior and Indian Affairs," Dr. P. H. Bryce. His duties would be to supervise the medical attendance of immigrants and Indians, and in this capacity Bryce conducted the first systematic survey of the health of Canadian Indian tribes.[72]

Ungenerous and inadequate as this policy appears in retrospect, it must be admitted that the government believed that the Indians receiving free medical attendance were obtaining services denied to the average Canadian. The very fact that the Indians were wards of the government tended, in Sifton's view, to render them more dependent unless a firm line were taken pressing them to independence.

The government was at great pains to prove that there was progress in this direction. Tables prepared for Sifton demonstrated a decline in the amount of government rations to Indians, a decline which according to Frank Pedley, was "in a large measure, due to the growing ability of the individual Indians to support themselves."[73] It was departmental policy, he added, "not to pauperize the Indian but to make him furnish as near as possible an equivalent in labour for the assistance rendered." The intent of the department was to make "a strenuous effort in all directions . . . to make all Indians self-sustaining."[74]

IV

The administration of Indian lands was one of the least understood functions of the department.[75] To many speculators, businessmen and settlers the situation seemed quite clear. The Indians were sitting on valuable land which could be used more profitably by whites; accordingly the Indians should give way or be removed. Others conceded the Indians' right to some land, but contended that the reserves, originally based on calculation of a certain number of acres per capita or head of family, were unrealistically large when the number of Indians had been dwindling steadily. As the prairies began to fill with

white settlers, pressure on the government to obtain some or all of these lands for efficient exploitation increased. Such attitudes had been present almost since the treaties were signed—indeed in one form or another since the very arrival of Europeans in North America —and had if anything hardened in wake of the 1885 rebellion.[76] It was the influx of settlers in the twentieth century, however, which would help to generate very different policies, particularly when Frank Oliver came to office in 1905. The Indians would thenceforth come under every inducement and pressure to sell their lands and become assimilated.

Publicly, at least, Sifton refused to accede to these pressures and was thus the last Superintendent General who operated even superficially on the basis of the old philosophy. His was not a whole-hearted commitment to the Indian cause, but to pleas that he open up Indian lands, whether for agricultural, timber or mineral exploitation, he made the same dogged response throughout his term of office. The government acted as trustee for the Indians. "The law," he told Frank Oliver, "is very specific and clear." The Alberta member wanted a reserve at Stony Plain thrown open for settlement. He was firmly informed that "in no case in which the Indians are in possession of a reserve can the same be taken from them without their consent and the money placed to the general credit of all the Indians in the country.... This system makes it... impossible to throw land held by the Indians open for settlement immediately on a proposition to that effect being made, even in cases in which it is clear to the Department that it is in the general interest as well as in the interest of any particular band themselves that such land should be thrown open."[77] Annually Sifton had to explain to Parliament that very little could be done without the consent of the tribes concerned, and that sometimes that was difficult to obtain. "Whatever may be deemed desirable or otherwise," he told A. A. C. LaRivière, M.P., "the fact of the matter is that the Indians own these lands just as much as my hon. friend (Mr. LaRivière) owns any piece of land for which he has a title in fee simple. The faith of the government of Canada is pledged to the maintenance of the title of these Indians in that land." The government would seek Indian consent to exploitation of their lands, "when we think it will not interfere with the means of livelihood of the Indians."[78]

The problems, and Sifton's approaches to them, are best illustrated with specific examples. The Dokis Indians' refusal to accede to the exploitation of pine timber on their reserve in Ontario particularly exercised departmental officials. The forest was mature, and if it was not lost to fire, it would soon begin to rot and lose its value. Even taking only those trees over nine inches at the base, it was calculated that some 45,000,000 board feet of timber could be harvested. In this case Sifton had the power and was quite prepared to legislate to impose an arrangement whereby the band, consisting of 80 people, would

receive some $250,000 cash bonus, and a royalty of $1 per 1000 board feet. That the deal was perfectly logical and advantageous for the Indians seemed obvious to the department. But there was some impatience with the attitude of the aged chief Dokis who was unimpressed with the prospect of monetary gain; he believed he had a moral or spiritual obligation to preserve the forest intact for his successors.[79]

In another case, the Canadian Northern Railway promoters, Mackenzie and Mann, wished in 1904 to obtain a townsite for a divisional point, to be located on the Coté Reserve in north-east Assiniboia. It was, they claimed, the best site in twenty miles. The Indians were willing to surrender the land because of the high cash value, and they were supported by the local Agent. But Sifton believed that the town (Kamsack), being located on the reserve, would create serious social problems. Only reluctantly did he agree to the sale, after ensuring that the Indians would profit from the arrangement as would any ordinary landowner. Unhappily the adverse effects foreseen by Sifton were realized in the future.[80]

A different problem faced the department at the Roseau River Reserve in the early 1890's, located on first-class agricultural land. By 1898 the population had declined to 261 and much of the land was not being used. There was pressure from the surrounding areas and from Indian Department officials to obtain a surrender of at least part of the lands. By 1900 the population was reduced to 244, and by 1902 to 209. The Indians simply were making no progress; as the districts around the reserve were settled the Indians seemed unwilling to work and were tempted to drift into nearby settlements. Their numbers depleted by disease and their spirit sapped, the agent believed that the only hope was to obtain a surrender and use the money to purchase a more isolated reserve where they could be relocated. This was done, after some difficulty in persuading the Indians, in 1903.[81]

In southern Alberta the Blackfoot Indians refused all methods of persuasion by the ranching community to obtain grazing leases on the reserve. There was nothing the department could do in face of such intransigence.[82] On the other hand, the Blackfoot tribe could only have been reinforced in their position by observing the nearby Blood Reserve, where the chiefs had agreed to a lease. When a group of the tribe protested to Ottawa, they claimed that the chiefs had not been representative of the tribe and that each man should have been consulted in a tribal vote, that the leaseholders had not taken up their leases promptly as prescribed in the leases, and that promises of money and free trips to Ottawa for the chiefs (obviously not in the lease) had not been fulfilled. In this case Sifton flatly rejected the tribal contentions.[83] Unquestionably he saw the issue simply in terms of a legal contract, the obligations of which the Indians must fulfil.

The most extended case involving Indian lands in these years

concerned the Songhees Reserve which was located precisely where the city of Victoria, B.C., wished to expand. In British Columbia the province had reversionary rights to any Indian lands sold, or funds arising therefrom. The local government viewed the land as a potential source of public money, insisting that the Indians were only entitled to the original value of the land, not the tremendous increment to its value caused by its being in an urban setting. The provincial government hoped through this subterfuge to buy the land for a song, and then parcel it out at high prices to various urban interests. It also wanted the federal government to assume the costs of obtaining a new reserve and removing the Indians. Sifton absolutely refused such terms. He was as desirous as anyone to remove the Indians from the "contaminating influences of city life with the worst and most demoralizing features of which they are constantly brought in contact."[84] But the Indians must, he insisted, obtain the full value of the lands.[85]

Land surrenders and leases could serve many purposes. They could be a source of funds to repay tribal debts, or to provide capital for new equipment or enterprises. Timber, grazing or mineral leases in particular were designed to produce income, and sometimes work, for Indians over a number of years. On occasion it was desirable, at least to the department, to remove the Indians from demoralizing urban influences. Similary when a reserve declined in population Indians began to drift to other reserves, and the lands could be sold and the money put to use for the benefit of the other bands.[86] Undeniably the department was sometimes wrong in its judgment, and also induced some Indians in questionable ways to give up their lands. There seemed to be a belief that the Indian population would continue to dwindle, so that large tracts of land on some reserves simply would never be required; why not sell the land, or lease it, when the monetary benefits seemed so obvious? The government also made the assumption that all Indians could and should become agricultural, even in some unsuitable districts, influencing its attitude to non-agricultural lands.[87]

Indian land surrenders were by no means new when Sifton came to office.[88] It is not clear how much land was surrendered during Sifton's term of office, but Frank Oliver claimed that 724,517 acres of Indian lands were sold between July 1, 1896 and March 31, 1909.[89] Generally speaking this was seen positively by the white community. Any criticism was directed at the government's failure to obtain more land from the Indians; the Indians, it was said, must not be allowed to stand in the way of progress, and the Indians' general well-being.[90] But no serious attempt was made to change the law to facilitate the appropriation of Indian lands by whites.[91] As to what the Indians themselves thought, the department tended to be impatient. Old Indian concepts of land and ownership were considered simply vestiges of a passing culture which was of itself inferior and inevitably giving

way to "civilization" and "progress." The government quite sincerely believed that this was in the best interest of the Indians.

V

Clifford Sifton's tenure as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs did not occasion dramatic changes in Canadian Indian policy. He had almost no creative new ideas to offer, and most of his policy statements and administrative reforms appear to have been generated substantially within the department. It is arguable that his administrative reforms made the service more efficient, more highly centralized, and that he made a fairly steady effort to minimize the number of incompetent officials. He left his stamp on the department in many of the leading personnel, and indeed in the drastic upheaval at all levels of the staff. The changes tended to bring to power men who were if anything less sympathetic to the Indians, and to place expenditure under the control of a cost-conscious bureaucracy.

Disillusionment with the reserve system was already present in the department when Sifton came to office, and before long would become more widespread. "Experience does not favour the view that the system makes for the advancement of the Indians," McKenna told Sifton in 1898.[92] The education system in particular was much slower in breaking down old customs than had been hoped. Yet there was no movement toward fundamental change, and Sifton tried to alter the existing reserve administration and the method of education to make them more efficient. Assimilation of individual Indians came to be regarded as the longer-term goal because of the difficulty of educating Indians to compete with whites or to make their way individually off the reserves. In the short run the emphasis was to be on a practical, limited education for entire bands, to make the Indian self-sufficient agriculturalists on the reserves, and to "wean" them from dependence upon the government. With this end in view the department also encouraged examples of progress among the Indians by special attention to successful Indians and agents.

In these years the Indians seemed at long last to be making the adjustment to reserve life; the decline in population was arrested and, perhaps with the aid of a program of vaccination for all Indian children, slight increases in population began to be noticed early in the twentieth century. Government officials could point to some improvements in agricultural progress on the reserves. Although Sifton accepted the widespread belief that Indians could not compete in white society and would require continued government assistance, he resisted complete acceptance of the policy of paternalism. He endeavoured to reduce Indian dependence upon the government. In the long run he hoped to see the Indians self-supporting, civilized, and accepting the competitive and individualistic values of his own

society. But continued parsimony in the administration reflected his view that Indians were not a major priority. They were a responsibility to be lived with, not likely to contribute significantly to the progress of the country.

This is to state the obvious: how else did men of Sifton's day regard Indians? Even Lord Minto, no admirer of Sifton and critical of certain details in the Indian administration, concluded by the time he left the country in 1904 that "Canada's management of her Indians has been excellent and something to be proud of for it's a very difficult question, or rather has been, for it is practically worked out now."[93]

Not all of Minto's contemporaries would have agreed. With Sifton's successor, Frank Oliver, and a new Indian Act in 1906, a different era of greater firmness and of serious efforts to assimilate the Indians and obtain their lands was ushered in. By comparison Sifton's term of office appears to be but a mild transition from the practices of early administration, an effort to make past policies more efficient. But in a sense it was also a period which helped to make possible the more drastic change realized under his successors.

FOOTNOTES

1 *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*, December 12, 1896.

2 Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, vol. 242, pp. 231–2, Sifton to Walter Scott, MP, March 5, 1901.

2 Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers*, 1898, #1 (Auditor General's Report for 1896–97), pt. A, p. 4; pt. G, pp. 2–3; pt. H, p. 2; 1906, #1 (Auditor General's Report for 1904–05), pt. C, p. 5; pt. J, p. 2, pt. L, p. 2. The national budget increased from $43,174,000 in 1896–97 to $88,584,111 in 1904–05; the Department of the Interior budget from $817,394 to $4,175,000; and the Department of Indian Affairs from $962,977 to $1,248,000.

4 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1901, col. 2763, April 10, 1901.

5 *Tribune*, April 12, 1897. Even by Liberal calculations the total saving in government estimates for 1897 was only about $1.5 million, despite claims while in opposition that savings of $3 million or $4 million could be effected.

6 For greater detail on this issue, see D. J. Hall, "The Political Career of Clifford Sifton, 1896–1905," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1973, pp. 140–2. Hayter Reed was a former militia officer who had entered the Interior service in 1881 and became an Indian Agent and then Assistant Indian Commissioner for the North-West Territories in 1884. In 1893 he was promoted to the post of Deputy Superintendent General in Ottawa. See H. J. Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time*, second ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), p. 931; John Frederick Lewis Prince, "The Education and Acculturation of the Western Canadian Indian 1880–1970, with Reference to Hayter Reed," MA thesis, Bishop's University, 1974, esp. p. 38ff.

7 Sifton must have realized that this would be the case; see *Debates*, 1897, cols. 1709–21, May 4, 1897. McLean was promoted from head of the Land and Timber Branch to become Secretary and Chief Clerk. Sifton had a high regard for his ability; but a perusal of McLean's correspondence suggested a man of short temper, concerned with picayune detail in day-to-day matters, and very impressed with his own importance. On more than one occasion he complained to the Deputy that he was not being treated with due deference by other employees. When Sifton took over the department McLean sent him a long screed complaining of gross inefficiency in the Department (PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 7, 3880–4025, December 31, 1896, and encl.). McLean, grandson of a Liberal MP at the time of Alexander Mackenzie, one John Farris, had been appointed to the department in October 1876, rising to the position of first class clerk by 1896 (see memo in *ibid.*, 3973–87).

8 The appointment was effective February 1, 1897. McKenna was an Irish Catholic, born in Prince Edward Island in 1862. He had been Private Secretary to the Superintendent General in 1887–8, and a clerk thereafter. PAC, Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) Records, vol. 3853, file 77144; H. J. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 775.

9 In fairness it must be conceded that a hard line was not new. Certainly Reed, and sometimes his predecessor as Deputy, L. Vankoughnet, could be inflexible and unwilling to consider

the Indian viewpoint. Reed, nevertheless, had had at least two years' experience as an Indian agent. On his attitudes, see J. F. L. Prince, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 66, 74, 85. He admitted in 1895 that he was "necessarily out of touch, to a great extent, with the Indians."

10 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 214, pp. 692–4, Sifton to Smart, December 28, 1896; see also vol. 33, file "Smart, J. A. 1897."

11

	Total	Manitoba and North-West Territories
1896–97	$ 962,977.25	$701,503.83
1897–98	$1,001,304.93	$734,919.82
1898–99	$1,037,531.04	$776,192.92
1899–1900	$1,093,429.01	$823,951.34
1900–01	$1,075,849.22	$798,908.30
1901–02	$1,115,271.94	$822,444.00
1902–03	$1,141,099.08	$818,576.54
1903–04	$1,159,712.24	$804,098.55
1904–05	$1,248,305.00	$869,980.95

Source: *Sessional Papers*, 1898–1906, Auditor General's Reports. British Columbia Indians accounted for about one-tenth of the budget, and Ottawa office expenditure for about 6% or 7%, which obviously did not leave much for Indians in the rest of the country.

12 See J. B. D. Larmour, "Edgar Dewdney, Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories," M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Regina, 1969, ch. I–IV, pp. 276–7. On the earlier period, see H. D. Kemp, "The Department of the Interior in the West 1873–1883: an Examination of Some Hitherto Neglected Aspects of the Work of the Outside Service," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1950, pp. 12–32.

13 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 19, 12029–40, Forget to Sifton, January 20, 1897. The figures were those of Forget; in fact the reduction was from 19 employees to 6 in the Commissioner's office. The agencies abolished were Clandeboye, Portage la Prairie, Rat Portage, and Savanne. DIA Records, vol. 3877, file 91839–1.

14 PAC, Sifton Papers, *loc. cit.*; and DIA Records, vol. 3635, file 6567, D. C. Scott to the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, March 3, 1904.

15 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 19, 12059–60, Sifton to Forget, May 21, 1897; DIA Records, vol. 3877, file 91839–1. It should be noted that when Reed was Deputy Minister the administration had been centralized in practice in Ottawa, as he had been unwilling to delegate any authority. Seen in this light, Sifton's changes simply gave legal sanction to a situation which already existed; but it also permitted a reduction in manpower which redounded to the political credit of the Liberals. I am grateful to Dr. John Tobias of Red Deer College for pointing this out.

16 *Ibid.*, vol. 3635, file 6567, Frank Pedley (Deputy Superintendent General) to Sifton, March 24, 1904; Sifton Papers, vol. 221, pp. 346–7, Sifton to J. W. Smith, July 10, 1897.

17 DIA Records, vol. 3984, file 168921, James A. Smart, Return to the House of Commons concerning dismissals, June 1896 to April 25, 1898; vol. 3635, file 6567, D. C. Scott to the Deputy Superintendent General, March 3, 1904, pp. 17–18. Apart from those who resigned, twelve found their positions abolished and were not rehired, eight were removed for political partisanship, and eleven were removed for incompetence, disobedience, insubordination, drunkenness and related problems. (See also *ibid.*, vol. 3877, file 91839–1.) Those dismissed received gratuities on the following schedule: up to five years' service, 1 month's salary; 5 to 7 years' service, 2 months' salary; over 7 years' service, 3 months' salary. (*Ibid.*, Sifton to Forget, July 6, 1897.) To one correspondent who complained of the treatment meted out to civil servants, Sifton replied, "I can assure you that it has been no pleasure to me to dispense with the services of officials in the West, but in the public interest it was absolutely necessary to bring the expenditure on the Indian service within reasonable bounds, and this could not be done without dismissing some of the staff. Every effort was made in the reorganization to provide for as many of the old hands as possible. . . ." PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 220, pp. 619–20, Sifton to Dr. Hardy, May 29, 1897.

18 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3635, file 6567, D. C. Scott to the Deputy Superintendent General, March 3, 1904, pp. 17–18.

19 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 278, file 12; vol. 279, file 13; vol. 280, 18576–7.

20 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1120, p. 467, Sifton to Governor General in Council, July 7, 1897. One group of eleven employees had their salaries cut an aggregate of $2,200.

21 PAC, Sifton Papers, *loc. cit.*; DIA Records, vol. 3635, file 6567, D. C. Scott to the Deputy Superintendent General, March 3, 1904, p. 18.

22 See above, fn. 11.

23 See Sifton's explanation of the changes in *Debates*, 1899, cols. 5722–5, June 22, 1899. There were also changes in administrative structure at Ottawa, though less change in personnel. Sifton consolidated some seven branches of the department (Land and Timber, Accountant's, Correspondence, Registry, Technical, Statistics and Supply, and School) into three branches (Secretarial, Accountants, Land and Timber).

24 H. J. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 893; *Debates*, 1902, cols. 3035–7, April 8, 1902; *Sessional Papers*, 1904, #27, p. xvii. It should be added that petty rivalries among the leading officials in the

Indian Affairs department were perhaps an important factor in Sifton's decision to appoint someone from outside.

25 DIA Records, vol. 3635, file 6567, J. A. J. McKenna to The Superintendent General, January 12, 1904; and *passim*.

26 *Ibid.*, F. Pedley to Sifton, March 24, 1904, pp. 26–8.

27 At Ottawa the office hours were from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with one and a quarter hours for lunch. Nevertheless, J. D. McLean was complaining about all the correspondence imposed on the office by the centralization, with a reduced staff; he claimed that they actually had to write some 75 to 100 letters a day, and this with a staff of over forty (mostly clerks) at headquarters. DIA Records, vol. 1122, pp. 332–3, McLean to Smart, December 1, 1898; vol. 1125, p. 549, McLean to Miss Yielding, July 25, 1902.

28 *Manitoba Free Press*, December 29, 1896.

29 On the question in general, see J. W. Chalmers, *Education behind the Buckskin Curtain: a History of Native Education in Canada* (Edmonton: author, 1974); H. J. Vallery, "A History of Indian Education in Canada," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1942; Kathryn Kozak, "Education and the Blackfoot, 1870–1900," M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1971; Jacqueline Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites': Indian Education and Native Responses in the West, 1870–1910," in A. W. Rasporich, ed., *Western Canada, Past and Present* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), pp. 163–81.

30 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3674, file 11422, "Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds," Ottawa, March 14, 1879; C. B. Koester, "Nicholas Flood Davin: a Biography," Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1971, pp. 77–8.

31 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3920, file 116751–B, Martin Benson to the Deputy Superintendent General, June 23, 1903.

32 "My present impression," he told one of his Liberal colleagues in 1897, "is that there will be no substantial increases in these items [Indian education] in the next four years." PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 264, pp. 258–60, Sifton to Rev. A. Sutherland, General Secretary, Methodist Church, January 10, 1898; vol. 220, pp. 777–8, Sifton to J. G. Rutherford, MP, June 4, 1897. See also vol. 224, p. 435, Sifton to Rev. G. M. Grant, January 14, 1898.

33 *Debates*, 1899, cols. 5725–6, June 22, 1899.

34 *Ibid.*, 1897, col. 4076, June 14, 1897.

35 *Ibid.*, 1904, cols. 6946–56, July 18, 1904; see also 1903, cols. 7260–1, July 23, 1903.

36 Salaries ranged from $200 to $300; many teachers were not even required to have a teaching certificate.

37 *Debates*, 1899, cols. 7480–99, esp. 7483–6, July 14, 1899. With the hope that greater economy and better results might be achieved, there was a proposal made in the department that a hierarchy of schools be established. Children were then expected to attend school between the ages of six and sixteen. All children, under this plan, would begin in day schools, though there was no upper age limit. The more promising and healthy students would attend boarding school between the ages of eight and fourteen, and the best of these would be selected for industrial schools. PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1121, pp. 511–3, J. D. McLean to A. E. Forget, March 8, 1898; pp. 692–9, Memorandum, J. D. McLean, July 20, 1897; vol. 1121, pp. 689–91, J. A. Smart to Rev. A. J. Vining, May 30, 1898.

Sifton also opposed "transferring girls from the boarding [to the industrial] schools. In their case the domestic work in which they can assist at the schools in the later years of their pupilship is the best sort of industrial training that they can obtain." Sifton Papers, vol. 265, pp. 403–5, Sifton to Bishop Legal, March 22, 1901.

38 *Debates*, 1904, cols. 6946–56, July 18, 1904. A case in point occurred in 1903–1904 when the Oblate fathers were given permission to acquire the land and buildings of the St. Boniface Industrial School, in return for which they were to build and help support three new boarding schools, in addition to a fourth which was already nearing completion. While the Industrial School could not teach agriculture adequately, it would be taught to the boys at each boarding school, while the girls would be trained "to do house work." PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3920, file 116751–B, *passim.*, esp. Order in Council, January 8, 1904.

39 *Sessional Papers*, 1897, #14, pp. 416–7; 1906, #27, pt. ii, pp. 54–5.

40 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 265, pp. 403–5, Sifton to Bishop Legal, March 22, 1901. He wrote, "I would infer from your Lordship's letter that we would in some way have to make good to the Indians what they lose in service through the absence of their boys and what they would get as marriage gifts from prospective sons in law if the girls were at home and eligible for marriage from their twelfth year. Action in that direction would come pretty close to a system of purchase of Indian children, and, it strikes me, would be more open to objection than even the compulsory method." It should be added that years earlier the department had begun the practise of giving the children in Manitoba and Territorial schools a noonday meal as an inducement to attend, and this practise continued; see J. W. Chalmers, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–3; PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1120, pp. 692–9, Memorandum, J. D. McLean, July 20, 1897.

41 *Debates*, 1902, cols. 3043–6, April 18, 1902.

42 Several times proposals for increased pay for teachers were made within the department. In 1887 the Deputy Superintendent General, L. Vankoughnet, proposed such action to

Prime Minister Macdonald, but it was ignored. In 1891 another proposal was buried, as was a proposal from an Indian Agent and backed by the Indian Commissioner in 1903. This latter suggestion apparently never reached the ministerial level. Only once, and then put obliquely and unsympathetically, does the idea seem to have reached Sifton's desk. Not until about 1912 or 1913 was there a substantial increase in salaries over levels of the 1880's, but they were still too low to compete very effectively for good teachers. PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3965, file 1500000–8; vol. 1120, pp. 692–9, Memorandum, J. D. McLean, July 20, 1897.

43 *Ibid.*, vol. 3920, file 116751–A, Benson to the Deputy Superintendent General, June 23, 1903. Concerning similar sentiments about educational expenditure among the Yukon Indians, see vol. 3962, file 147654–1, vol. 2, esp. F. T. Congdon to F. Pedley, April 1903; and John Ross to Congdon, July 6, 1903.

44 Sifton did make two small concessions in extending departmental obligations, expending up to $5,000 for education among Yukon Indians, an area ignored by the government prior to the gold rush; and permitting halfbreed children residing on Indian reserves to attend the Indian schools. *Ibid.*; and vol. 3931, file 117377–1C, D. Laird to J. D. McLean, August 27, 1900.

45 See Sifton's speech of November 17, 1902 to the General Assembly of the Methodist Church (Toronto *Globe*, November 18, 1902). Although he was not speaking about Indian education, the points made are applicable.

46 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3635, file 6567, Pedley to Sifton, March 24, 1904, p. 4.

47 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 238, pp. 635–6, Sifton to Rev. S. D. Chown, August 29, 1900.

48 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1119, pp. 625–8, H. Reed to Sifton, December 26, 1896; vol. 1120, pp. 36–7, Reed to Sifton, January 26, 1897.

49 *Ibid.*, and pp. 734–7, Sifton to Governor General in Council, December 30, 1896; Sifton Papers, vol. 68, file "Minto, Lord 1899," *passim.*; Lord Minto Papers, vol. 10, pp. 3–5, Minto to Sifton, May 1, 1899, and reply, pp. 6–8, May 11, 1899; pp. 9–10, Minto to Sifton, May 15, 1899.

50 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1121, Sifton to Governor General in Council, September 11, 1897; see also vol. 1125, p. 164, same, September 4, 1901 (concerning Chief Paul of White Whale Lake), and p. 379, same, March 11, 1902 (concerning Chief Piapot of the Qu'Appelle Agency).

51 *Ibid.*, vol. 3877, file 91839–1, H. Reed to A. E. Forget, July 9, 1896. For another example, see S. Raby, "Indian Treaty No. 5 and The Pas Agency, Saskatchewan N.W.T.," *Saskatchewan History*, XXV, 1972, pp. 108–9.

52 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 106, 83483–92, McKenna to Sifton, December 10, 1901.

53 *Debates*, 1902, cols. 3054–6, April 18, 1902; 1903, cols. 6422–4, July 10, 1903; 1904, cols. 6942–5, 6954–7, July 18, 1904. There was also encouragement for Indians to work with white farmers where "they learn much more than they would on the reserves," particularly "manners, morals, customs and ideas of earning a living in a civilized way." (DIA Records, vol. 3920, file 116751–1A, Martin Benson to Deputy Superintendent General, June 23, 1903, p. 6.) Sifton, however, never went as far as suggested by J. D. McLean, who believed that "it might be advisable . . . in the case of graduates of Industrial Schools to provide for their *ipso facto* enfranchisement, and give them locations on their reserves as enfranchised Indians." (*Ibid.*, vol. 1120, pp. 692–9, Memorandum, McLean, July 20, 1897.)

54 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 201, 159135, Sifton to Laurier, November 19, 1914; DIA Records, vol. 3635, file 6567, Pedley to Sifton, March 24, 1904. The figures supplied by Frank Pedley were as follows:

	1897–98	1902–03	Increase
Cattle	15,767	21,291	5,524
Cleared and natural pasturage (acres)	1,917,019	2,279,922	362,903
Cultivated and made pasturage (acres)	16,703	32,557	15,854
Crops (staples) in bushels	128,447	288,695	160,248
Increase in value of clearing, cultivating, buildings, agricultural products, etc.	$ 51,006.00	$ 140,678.00	$ 89,672.00
Increase in value Live Stock & Poultry, Implements, real property, General & Household effects, Real & Personal Property, Incomes	$6,339,600.67	$11,636,976.90	$5,297,376.23

55 On the history of the issue, see F. E. LaViolette, *The Struggle for Survival: Indian Cultures and the Protestant Ethic in British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian–European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977).

56 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1121, pp. 399–400, Sifton to Governor General in Council, January 18, 1898.

57 See *ibid.*, vol. 3825, files 60511-1 and 2, *passim.*

58 PAC, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Papers, vol. 248, 69214–20, Minto to Laurier, January 16, 1903; 69232–8, same, January 17, 1903. Minto claimed that "there is a want in many cases of human sympathy between the white administrator and the Indian," and suggested that "somewhat narrow religious sentiments have not conduced to a sympathetic understanding of the Indian races."

59 PAC, Minto Papers, vol. 6, 30–6, F. Pedley to Laurier, January 30, 1903 (quoting Graham).

60 Minto's sympathy with the Indians reveals considerable innocence about the importance of the dance in Indian life; he saw it simply as a continuing pleasant tradition, in the same way that the Scots wore kilts and played highland games. (PAC, Laurier Papers, vol. 252, 70325–9, Minto to Laurier, February 17, 1903.) Perhaps important was the comment of Comptroller F. White of the North-West Mounted Police that "the objection to Indian dances has changed from the atrocities practiced by the Indians, to the evil influences of the whites and Half breeds who attend the dances and corrupt the poor Indian." (Minto Papers, vol. 29, 38, White to Minto, May 25, 1903.)

61 *Debates*, 1898, cols. 5661–2, 6960–5, May 17, 1898.

62 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1125, pp. 550–1, McLean to Deputy Superintendent General, July 25, 1902.

63 After firing one Indian Agent for drunkenness, Sifton commented, "I can see no use whatever in endeavouring to elevate the moral tone of the Indian race and sending drunken officials to carry on the work." PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 243, p. 528, Sifton to Rev. John McDougall, May 14, 1901.

64 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1124, pp. 507–8, McLean to J. Girard, M.P., March 2, 1901.

65 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 264, pp. 172–3, Sifton to Rev. J. W. Lawrence, December 10, 1897.

66 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 1121, pp. 511–3, J. D. McLean to A. E. Forget, March 8, 1898. A very useful survey is G. Graham-Cumming, "Health of the Original Canadians, 1867–1967," *Medical Services Journal, Canada*, vol. XXIII, February 1967, pp. 115–66. This article serves to update the basic study by C. R. Maundrell, "Indian Health, 1867–1940," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1941.

67 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 102, 80470–3, G. A. Kennedy, M.D., to Sifton, January 14, 1901. This is substantially confirmed by G. Graham-Cumming, *op. cit.*, p. 134. Among the Crees the mortality rate had been as high as 137 per 1000. Most of this was caused by tuberculosis. By 1929 the tuberculosis death rate had fallen to 8 per thousand, still twenty times the national average; by 1967 it was less than 10 per 100,000, but still five times the national average.

68 One exception was A. S. Kendall, M.P. for Cape Breton, who angrily termed the low level of expenditure "simply criminal," and commented that the $3,000 estimate for medical attendance in New Brunswick "would not provide them [the Indians] with coffins in the spring of the year." *Debates*, 1902, cols. 3051, 3053, April 18, 1902.

69 *Ibid.*, col. 3041, April 18, 1902; PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 265, pp. 423–4, Sifton to Rev. John Fraser, March 29, 1901. It should be pointed out that most doctors only supplemented their incomes by being available as required by the Indians, and did not live on reserves.

70 *Debates*, 1902, col. 3040, April 18, 1902.

71 *Ibid.*, 1903, col. 6329, July 9, 1903. A fairly long debate on aspects of the question is *ibid.*, cols. 6326–52, 6408–9, July 9 and 10, 1903.

72 *Ibid.*, 1904, cols. 6960–4, July 18, 1904; *Sessional Papers*, 1906, #27, pp. xx, 271–8; M. Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870–1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), pp. 227–9; G. Graham-Cumming, *op. cit.* pp. 124–5.

73 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3635, file 6567, Pedley to Sifton, March 24, 1904. Pedley's figures were as follows:

			Decrease
Indians on the ration list	1890–91	12,155	
	1896–97	8,853	3,302
	1902–03	5,928	2,925
Flour	1890–91	1,745,300 lbs.	
	1896–97	1,286,100 lbs.	459,200
	1902–03	991,050 lbs.	295,050
Beef	1890–91	2,029,697 lbs.	
	1896–97	1,409,783 lbs.	619,914
	1902–03	1,206,715 lbs.	203,068
Bacon	1890–91	245,742 lbs.	
	1896–97	149,266 lbs.	96,476
	1902–03	135,887 lbs.	13,379

74 *Ibid.*, D. C. Scott to Pedley, March 3, 1904.

75 *Ibid.*, vol. 119, pp. 616–8, Hayter Reed to Sifton, December 23, 1896. According to the Act, "Indian Lands" included any reserve, or portion of a reserve, surrendered to the Crown, generally to be sold or used for the benefit of the Indians. It also stated, "The expression 'Reserve' means any tract or tracts of land set aside by Treaty or otherwise for the use or benefit of or granted to a particular Band of Indians, of which the legal title is in the Crown,

and which remains a portion of the said Reserve and includes all the trees, wood, timber, soil, stones, minerals, metals and other valuables thereon or therein." See also *ibid.*, vol. 3875, file 90, 880–2, L. Vankoughnet to T. M. Daly, June 28, 1893.

76 See Stewart Raby, "Indian Land Surrenders in Southern Saskatchewan," *The Canadian Geographer*, XVII, 1973, pp. 36–52. A case in point is the attitude of Frank Oliver before and after the events of 1885; see W. S. Waddell, "The Honorable Frank Oliver," M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1950, pp. 58–62, 107–8, 133 n. 101.

77 PAC, Sifton Papers, vol. 264, pp. 87–8, Sifton to Oliver, August 5, 1897. It should be noted that when Sifton went to Ottawa in 1896 he apparently assumed that Indian lands could readily be appropriated by departmental order. It was only after his officials pointed out the difficulties to him, and the Department of Justice ruled in favour of the Indians, that Sifton took the line of adhering to the law. This did not, of course, prevent him from trying to persuade the Indians to agree to certain surrenders, in which respect he was somewhat more aggressive than his Conservative predecessors. I am grateful for these comments to Dr. John Tobias of Red Deer College, who also generously permitted me to examine some of the work he has done for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians.

78 *Debates*, 1904, cols. 6952–3, July 18, 1904; see also 1903, cols. 6410–5, July 10, 1903.

79 PAC, Sifton Papers, *loc. cit.*; DIA Records, vol. 1125, pp. 124–9, J. D. McLean to Sifton, August 13, 1901. On the concept "of the reserve as a thing to be handed down inviolate and in trust," see S. Raby, "Indian Land Surrenders," p. 46.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 44; PAC, DIA Records, vol. 4015, file 273023, vol. 1, *passim.*; and see T. D. Regehr, *The Canadian Northern Railway: Pioneer Road of the Northern Prairies 1895–1918* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 172–4.

81 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3730, file 26306–1.

82 *Ibid.*, vol. 3571, file 130–18.

83 *Ibid.*, vol. 3571, file 130–19. This experience probably contributed to later Blood intransigence on land sales from the reserve; see *ibid.*, vol. 1547, Deputy Superintendent General to W. J. Hyde, August 9, 1911.

84 The quotation is from Premier J. H. Turner in a letter to J. A. J. McKenna, September 22, 1897, in *ibid.*, vol. 3688, file 13886–2.

85 The extensive files on this issue are in *ibid.*, vols. 3688–90, files 13886–1 to 13886–4; see also *Debates*, 1899, cols. 5703–9, June 22, 1899.

86 S. Raby, "Indian Land Surrenders," *passim.*

87 *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50; and Raby, "Indian Treaty No. 5," pp. 111–2.

88 See Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, 3 vols. [Ottawa, 1891 and 1912] (Toronto: Coles, 1971 reprint).

89 *Debates*, 1909–10, p. 784, December 1, 1909. The money accrued from sales was $2,156,020. In addition some 1020 islands were sold, including 242 islets in Georgian Bay judged to be almost valueless; the sales of all islands realized $74,353.

90 See the comments of R. L. Borden and G. E. Foster in *ibid.*, 1906, pp. 719–20, March 27, 1906; also pp. 948–9, 951.

91 The only change was an amendment in 1898 permitting Justices of the Peace to certify the validity of land surrenders. There seems to have been no serious thought given to introducing the contemporary American allotment system, intended to speed assimilation. See S. Raby, "Indian Land Surrenders," p. 37.

92 PAC, DIA Records, vol. 3848, file 75235–1, McKenna to Sifton, April 17, 1898.

93 PAC, Minto Papers, letterbook (mfm), vol. IV, p. 300, Minto to Lt. Col. F. White, February 23, 1904.