

STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE ALLIED TRIBES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA.

5th February, 1919.

The Committee of the Indian Conference held at Vancouver in June, 1916, acting as the Executive Committee of the allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia, at a meeting held in the City of Vancouver on the 4th and 5th February, 1919, at which in addition to all members of the Committee were present special representatives of the Nishga Tribe, the Okanagan Tribe, and the Stalo or Lower Fraser Tribe, it was decided to respectfully place the following matters before the Government of Canada:-

REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

The Committee, having some reason to fear that the two Governments may at an early date pass Orders-in-Council adopting this Report, is desirous to remind the Government of Canada of the strong representations which ever since the Commission was appointed, have been made by the Indian Tribes, the Society of the Friends of the Indians, and the Social Service Council of Canada, urging that the Report should not be adopted until after the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council shall have determined the land rights of the Indians of British Columbia. In this connection the Committee relies upon the assurance given by the Prime Minister of Canada on 27th March, 1913, that it would be open to the Government of Canada to defer dealing with the findings of the Royal Commission until a decision had been procured from the Judicial Committee. The Committee strongly re-affirms the views set forth by the Indian Tribes as above stated, being of the opinion that the Indian Tribes of the Province are unalterably opposed to any dealing with the findings of the Commission except in light of a decision of the Judicial Committee.

PROPOSED REDUCTION OF RESERVES.

We have reason to believe that the Indian Department will soon endeavour to obtain the consent of the Indian Tribes to the findings of the Royal Commission recommending that various lands be cut off from reserves and entertains hope that such efforts will succeed. Perhaps the Government may think the allied Tribes are asleep or perhaps the Government thinks the Tribes have forgotten. Perhaps the Government may have forgotten, but the Tribes have not forgotten neither are they asleep. They are very much awake. Therefore we think it may be well to refresh the memory of the Government as to the following words contained in the resolution of the Interior Tribes passed on 6th December, 1917:-

"Now we declare that until either the Governments shall
"have conceded the tribal ownership of our Territories claimed
"by us and upon the basis of such ownership shall have adjusted
"our foreshore rights, fishing rights, hunting rights, water
"rights and all other general rights, or the issues contained in
"the Nishga Petition and all other issues connected with them
"which require to be decided, shall have been decided by the
"Judicial Committee and in light of the judgment of that Tribunal
"all our general rights shall have been adjusted, we are unani-
"mously and firmly determined to stand with the Nishga Tribe and
"not to consider the Report of the Royal Commission or any of the
"findings of that Report or any recommendations which may have
"been made by the Royal Commission."

We are sure the Tribes meant what they said at that time and we are also sure the Tribes still hold that opinion as strongly as ever.

PLANS FOR SETTLING SOLDIERS.

From official announcements the Committee knows of the plans for settling over fifteen thousand soldiers upon the best available lands of British Columbia. We are also informed of the letter addressed by Mr. O'Meara on behalf of the allied Indian Tribes to Sir Thomas White Acting Prime Minister of Canada on 18th November last to which, although consideration of the Government was promised no answer has yet been given. The Committee strongly supports all contained in that letter and desires to protest with all possible force against the carrying out of any such plan until the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council shall have been secured and the matter of lands to be reserved for the Indians shall have been adjusted.

PROPOSED EXPROPRIATION OF RESERVES.

From many sources of information we believe it is being seriously proposed to expropriate certain reserves and portions of reserves so that the land so expropriated may be available for settlement of soldiers. We very strongly protest against all such proposals, from whatever quarter, as most unjust and entirely unjustifiable, and we express the hope that the Government of Canada will positively refuse to consider taking any action of that sort.

PROPOSED TREATY REGARDING FISHERIES.

Information coming from both the Indian Department and the Fisheries Department has been placed before us from which it appears there is now before the Governments of Canada and the United States a recommendation regarding fisheries made by an International Commission, under which if adopted by those two Governments, every Indian along the Fraser River and its tributaries will be prohibited from taking salmon above tidal water even as food for himself and family. We very strongly protest against the proposed treaty as a grave and unjustifiable violation of the aboriginal rights of the Tribes inhabiting the Fraser River region, numbering nearly ten thousand people, who have from time immemorial exercised those rights. Many protests on the subject of fisheries have already been sent in by various Tribes.

INFORMATION TO PARTIES CONCERNED.

The Committee decided to place a copy of this Statement in the hands of each of the following:- the Governor General of Canada, the Acting Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, the Premier of British Columbia, and the President of the United States.