SPAM 3795

19137

BISHOP DU VERNET AND THE INDIANS

THE BISHOP'S CRITICISM

The Charge delivered by Bishop Du Vernet to his Synod at Prince Rupert on 25th September, 1912, contained the following paragraph:—

"Notwithstanding the unrest caused by agitators from without, the Christianized natives of our various Indian Missions show the transforming power of the Gospel when brought to them by men who have spent their lives among them for their good."

We having repeatedly asked for an explanation of these remarks, the Bishop in December addressed to our Chairman and published a letter in which while acknowledging the sincerity of our efforts he criticized us upon the alleged ground that we had adopted the policy of stirring up the Indians by sending letters urging them to take action to defend their rights, by circulating petitions among them, by summoning delegates to meet in conference, and by collecting money from Indian villages.

OUR ANSWER

In February, acting under a resolution passed at the meeting then held, our acting Chairman addressed to the Bishop and

published a letter in which it was stated that we had not adopted the policy of stirring up the Indians, but on the contrary had adopted and carried out with a large measure of success the policy of seeking to prevent trouble and allay unrest among them, and it was emphatically denied that we had ever done any one of the particular things alleged.

THE REAL CAUSE OF UNREST

A further most conclusive answer to the Bishop's criticism will be found in the Charge delivered by himself at the meeting of his Synod held at the same place on 10th August, 1909. In that Charge, **delivered in the year previous to that in which our organization was formed**, the Bishop testified that serious unrest then existed, attributed that unrest to its real cause—THE LAND QUESTION,—and declared his adherence to principles in every respect identical with those upon the basis of which our undertaking was entered upon and has since been consistently carried forward.

In proof of these statements we quote the following from the report of that Charge published by the "Prince Rupert Empire": "* * * * In reviewing the Indian Work of the Diocese during the past year, while there is much to record that is encouraging, especially in the way in which some of our enlightened natives are proving themselves worthy of being ranked as useful citizens and should be enfranchised, yet it cannot be denied that there is much unrest on account of the land question, and this unrest has hindered spiritual work. It

was inevitable that the inrush of settlers taking up land over which the natives have been accustomed to hunt should cause agitation, but I cannot help feeling that much of this friction might have been avoided had there been a better understanding between the Dominion and Provincial Governments in regard to the rights of the Indians, and had there been at the outset a formal treaty. While it is true that the Dominion Government has dealt liberally with the Indians, looking well after their interests, yet the natives do not understand this. They were not properly consulted when the reserves were set apart. They do not see that the money spent upon their education, etc., has any connection with the surrender of their lands. Undoubtedly the demands that many of the Indians are now making are unreasonable, but behind all the unrest there is a cause which must be dealt with according to the principle of equity if this feeling of unrest is to be finally removed. For this reason I am glad to hear that the two Governments are submitting a test case to the Privy Council, and I earnestly trust that a final and authoritative answer which will settle the conflicting claims of the three parties,—the Indians, the Dominion and the Province,—will soon be given. I wish to commend the way in which our missionaries have counselled our natives to be law-abiding and to patiently await the settlement of their grievances. * * * *"

PUBLISHED BY

THE CONFERENCE OF FRIENDS OF THE INDIANS
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA