

C141/158.
Africa
28th Oct 1886

Dear Capt McCallum.
Knowing that
you in common with
myself and others take a
deep interest in Indian
affairs, and that you have
a sincere wish to see the
writings of those poor
people righted, I send
you the enclosed letter
by Bishop Cridgel bearing
on the present difficulty
at Metlakatla, which if
not bearing out the opinions
of many legal minds on
the subject of Indian title
to the soil, is at least
founded on common

*Sense Principles
Justice and equity -*

*Sincerely yours
W. T. Macdonald*

Daily Colonist

THURSDAY MORNING, OCT. 25TH, 1886.

The Metlakahtians.

TO THE EDITOR:—The intended despatch of another war-vessel against the Metlakahtians leads me to solicit a space in your columns for a few words in the interests of justice and peace. My familiar acquaintance with the affairs of that settlement from the beginning, and my firm conviction of the peaceful character and loyal intentions of its inhabitants, induce me to use my humble efforts to move the government from their design. To those who have impartially watched the course of events it will be apparent that the Metlakahtians have been guilty of no illegal acts, nor hostile demonstrations, in the steps they have taken to establish their rights to their ancient inheritance. They have in a peaceful way done no more than what is common in disputes about land to bring the question to a legal issue. The issue is twofold, first with the government, and secondly with the Church Missionary Society, an ecclesiastical sect (for in this province it is simply sect) whose services they have dispensed with.

The issue with the government is vital, being nothing less than denial of their title to the land. The Metlakahtians, resting on the principles of natural justice held all the world over, claim that they have a communal title to the land held by their forefathers from time immemorial, and that no powers has, through conquest, acquired the right of giving it away. This view of the case has been enunciated by the most competent legal authorities, and was endorsed by the viceroy of the Dominion, the nearest approach to the pledge of majesty that could be made. The Metlakahtians claim a right to the land, not through favor of any reserve made by government, but because it is their patrimony.

The governments deny this but the Indians know it; and, therefore, they have regarded the act of the government in surveying the reserve, not as a friendly proceeding in their interest as wards of the crown, but as a preliminary step to depriving them of all right and title in the land, if needs be by force of arms. They therefore looked upon the surveyor in the light of a trespasser, and in pulling up his stakes they intended no rebellion, but employed their only or best means of bringing the contention to a legal issue.

To this end they have also subscribed a large sum of money to meet the expenses of the action, and this they conceive to be the highest pledge they could afford of their loyal and peaceful intentions.

The contention with the ecclesiastical body referred to is somewhat different.

The "society" who were permitted to occupy the site of the mission house solely on account of services rendered to the inhabitants, now that those services are no longer required, still hold possession, apparently claiming ownership or at least the right of perpetual occupancy. The Metlakahtians, therefore, have taken, without violence or riot, the step of erecting a building on the land in question with the sole view of bringing this contention also to a legal issue. Should the society take the legal peaceful means of redress open to them through a civil action the Metlakahtians are prepared to abide by the ultimate decision of the law, whatever that may be. But as long as the governments seek to coerce the Metlakahtians into submission by the sword it is hardly to be expected that the society will be anxious to redress themselves.

This brings me to speak of the rights of the Indians as subjects. The state of pupillage in which they are, means only restraint in certain social and civil respects, but does not affect their immunities in respect of life, liberty and property, none of which, any more than those of white people, may be infringed upon except by due process of law. If I am cor-

rectly informed on this matter, the house of an Indian is as sacred as that of a white man, and not even the government can make forcible entry. If it be alleged that he has no title he can only be ejected by process of law. If this be so, then the forcible measures taken, or to be taken against the Indians are surely illegal. And certainly no less contrary to legal. And certainly no less contrary to sound policy. The consequences of resorting to a policy of war may be very grave. The Metlakahtians certainly will not resist her majesty's forces. But the tribes far and near are watching the case with intense anxiety as that on which their own rights depend. They will regard forcible seizure at Metlakahtla as the forerunner of what will happen to themselves and there are not wanting signs to show that in such a case they will be exasperated and alarmed in the highest degree. If war ensues these down-trodden members of the human family must be conquered in the end, but the whole guilt of innocent blood will surely rest on those who rejected the peaceable means of settlement provided by the law and sought it by force.

Your obedient servant,
Oct. 26th, 1886. EDWARD CRIDGE.

The Cormorant Leaves for Metlakahtla To-day.

After careful consideration by the government it has been decided to forward H. M. S. Cormorant to Metlakahtla, with Judge Harrison and Supt. Roycraft on board. This action has been thought necessary owing to the present situation in regard to the survey party under Mr. Tuck, C. E., being prevented from carrying out their restrictions through the interference of the Indians.