

Rapport du P. G. Thivier
au Ministre de l'Intérieur
sur la Colonie des Métis

St Paul des Métis.

1^{er} Fev. 1901

To the Honourable Clifford Sifton

Minister of the Interior.

Ottawa

The humble Petition of the undersigned most respectfully sets forth:

That in 1898 a day school were started at St Paul des Métis for the halfbreeds children of the colony, that owing to the distance and the poverty of the parents the children could not be got to attend the school, therefore proposing the necessity of opening a boarding school.

That the opening of the boarding school took place in September 1899 with an attendance of 48 children which number in this time has increased to 64,

that owing to the poverty of the halfbreeds the mission had from the start, to defray all the expenses incurred for the support of the boarding school, but in view of the ever increasing number of children and exhausted resources, the school will have to be closed next spring,

that owing to the halfbreeds having not the ownership of their farm a school district cannot be organized and therefore school taxes cannot be levied,

that in view of the ever increasing population which comprises 52 families, the progress made in the colony, and the certainty now that this scheme can be carried out justifying therefore any expenditure towards the support of the school

In view of the encouragement in many circumstances given by both the Conservative & Liberal Governments to the promoters of this scheme, inducing them thereby to go ahead with their work, and letting them hope that when the time comes, the Gov. will give them an effective help,

W. J. Sifton

that owing to the impossibility for the promoters to keep up
the school their resources being exhausted,

The Halfbreeds of St Paul des Metis united with their
pastors and through the kindness of their number
Mr Jho. Davis, pray that an annual grant of
sixty dollars (\$60.00) be granted for each child
[Dren] of school age attending the boarding
school of St Paul des Metis.

and we have signed

J. G. Merim ^{Pres}

Chs. Chazefais. O. M. S.

Elyar Laboucane

Charles Deausygon

Piere Baudran

Francis Boudron

Supplem^t

St Paul des Metis, Febr. 12, 1901.

To the Honourable C. Lipton,

Minister of the Interior.

Ottawa.

Honorable Sir.

With the petition here-in annexed I beg to submit to your consideration the following reports concerning our colony of St Paul des Metis.

I thought it advisable to do it, so that you might get a fair idea of the work done from its opening up to this date.

It was in the year 1896, on the fifteenth of July, that the colony was opened to the halfbreed settlers. Previous to that date, by mutual agreement between the Government and the C. P. R., a certain tract of land had been set apart for the exclusive use of the halfbreeds. So when the negotiations between the parties here-above mentioned, were closed, and a special grant for the purchasing of agricultural implements & seed grain was voted and approved by the Governor in Council, I was requested by Father Lacombe to come down and inform the halfbreeds that the colony was opened to settlers.

There were but two families when first I arrived in the colony; and although the prospect seemed rather gloomy, I set to work and began in putting up of a building for my own convenience, expecting that sooner or later the halfbreeds would come and settle.

My respects.



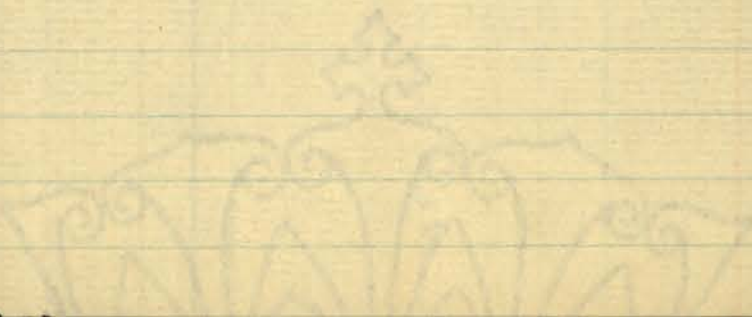
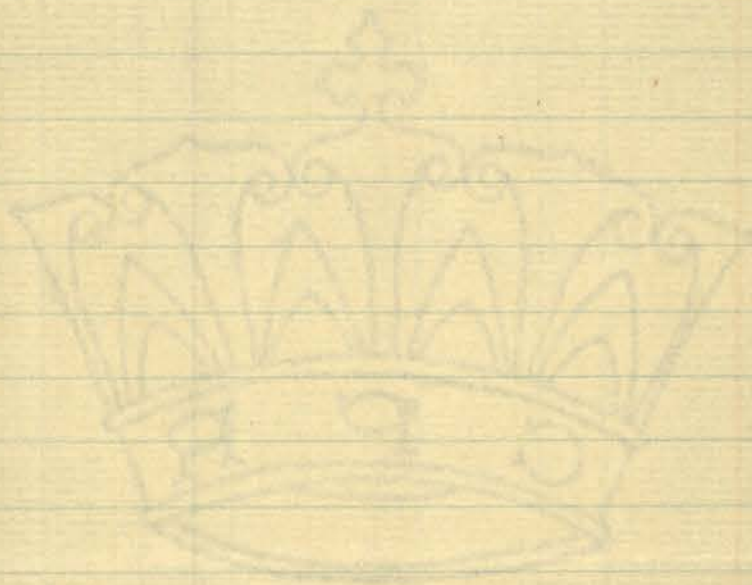
expectations were soon realised; for, on the next month
in August, 22 families were at work, breaking land,
building houses, and making hay for winter.

So that from the very beginning, the halfbreeds were
fully alive to the advantages they could derive from such
an establishment, and from the start were anxious to get
the most of them. Though slow, the increase in the popula-
tion has ever since been steady. So that today, there are
fifty two families in the colony, having their houses
each with a certain number of acres under cultivation.

I beg Honorable Sir, to draw your attention to this
fact; the more so that one of the greatest objections
brought against our scheme, was that the halfbreeds,
with their natural wandering propensities, would
soon be tired of this quiet way of living, and would
move away at the first opportunity, making thereby
the realisation of our plan quite an impossibility.

This apprehension has been more or less shared by
the public, and the Gov. alike. But the fact that one
of the 22 families that came at the opening of the colo-
ny, only one went away, through any other cause,
and for reasons which it is useless to divulge here,
this fact, I say, should for once and ever do away
with the apprehension that all the money and exertion
spent towards the realisation of that scheme would come
to naught, because of the impossibility to keep the halfbreeds
steady on their farms. We have made a four years' experi-
ment and as to those four years what do we find?

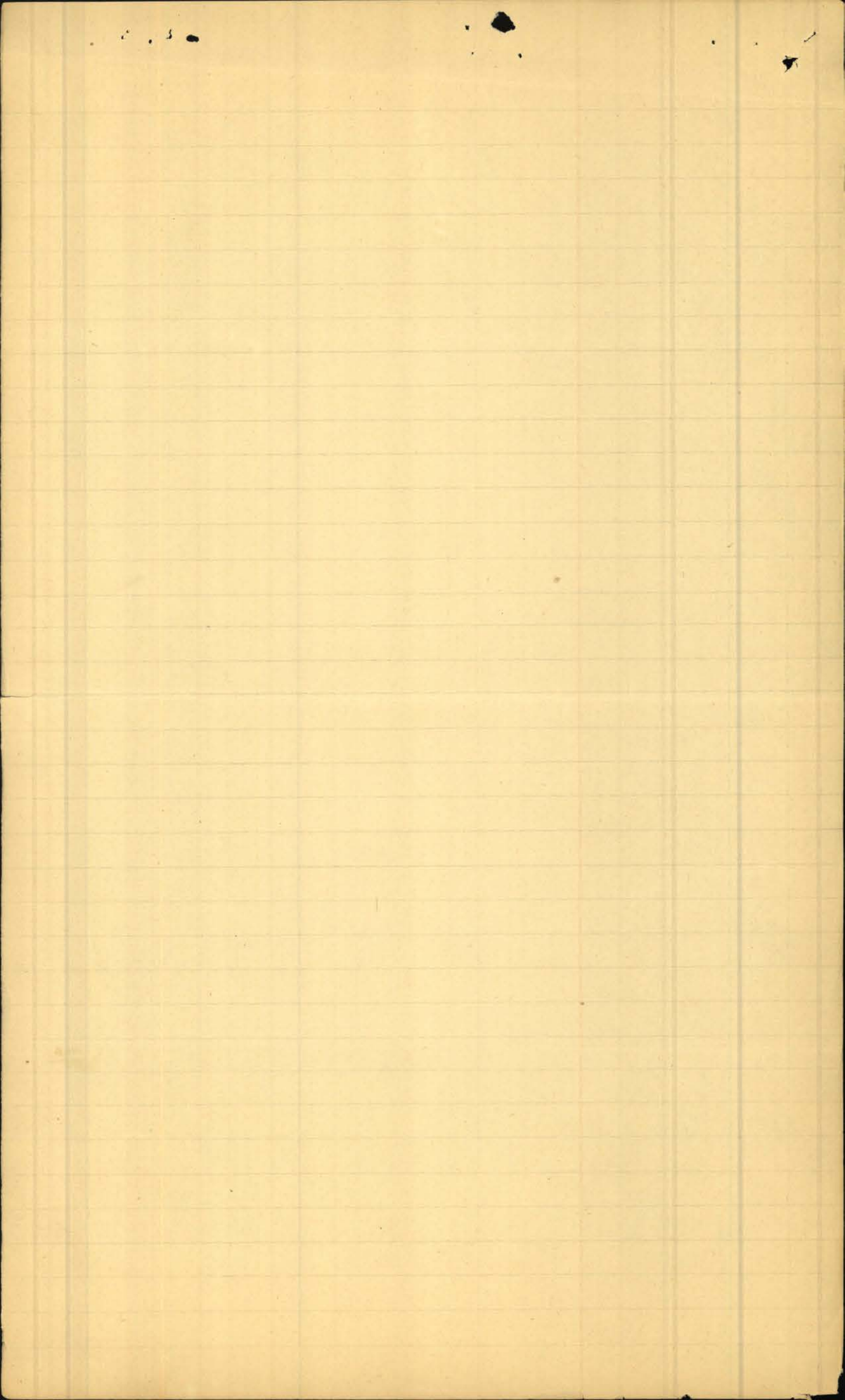
That the halfbreeds far from showing any attempt
desire to move away, have been increasing in number
all along and have taken an interest in the success or
work akin to any that we might expect from any
white settler in the same circumstances. They have made
up their mind to make the colony their home and as a



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set on that purpose, they went to work yearly improving their home according to their means. And as increase in the population is far from coming to a standstill, the prospect for next year is most auspicious, halfbreeds from all part of the North-West have been all along inquiring as to the advantages they could derive from the colony and a large immigration is expected every year. Many are waiting for a good opportunity to sell out their property to emigrate, and then come and settle for good in the colony. Not only the Halfbreeds living actually in the North-west have a mind to come, but also those who are scattered all over the States. Last summer I went across the line to see the halfbreeds living there and all those with whom I came in contact, and they were numerous, have been asking me about the colony and a great many contemplate the idea of coming as soon as possible.

So that the problem which puzzled many, and I must own, was even for the promoters of this scheme a source of anxiety, that is: Will the Halfbreeds come into the colony and make a home there for good? is solved. We have no more fear that on that score our expectations might be deceived. Fully aware, as we are, of the peculiar situation made to the Halfbreeds by the incessant flow of emigrants from the old countries we are more and more convinced that eventually the halfbreed race as a whole, will come to the colony as its last refuge.

Another fact, I wish to emphasize and draw your attention to; is that: Whatever might have been our anxieties to see the halfbreeds come and settle in the colony, we never went further beyond telling them that the colony were opened for settlement. To those who were anxious to get our advice before coming, we were wont to tell them that they would have to rely on their own energy and industry to amuse their belly-brood. In fact we were always under the impression that Providence

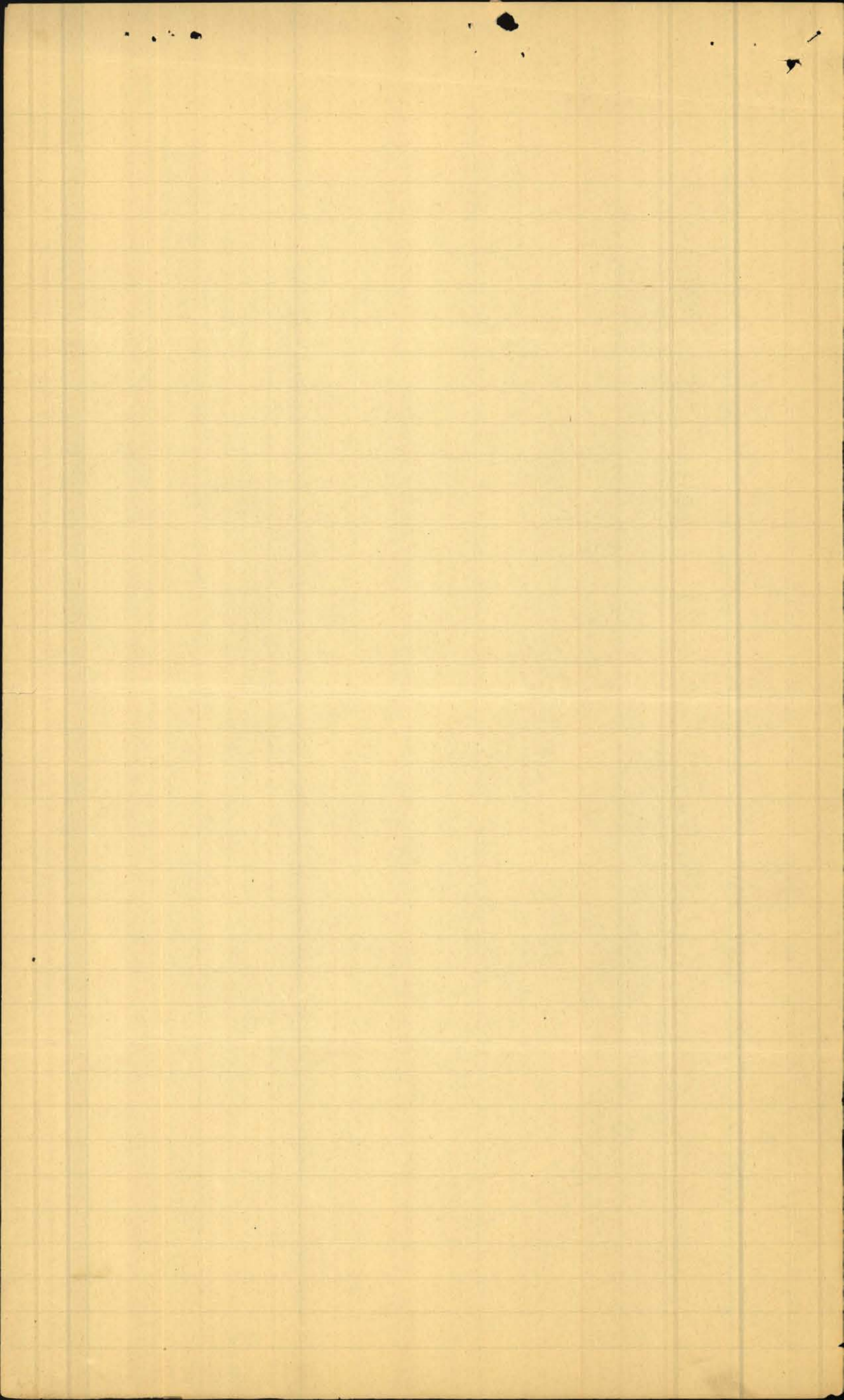


considering our limited resources, it was advisable at first to have but few families at once, and to keep ^{gradually} increasing the population with great care and discretion for the simple reason that being a great number of poor families together it might prove a great drawback for the colony and ~~endanger~~ endanger its very existence. So much so that I do not remember having once induced a family to come. Those who are here now come on their own accord without any persuasion or inducement on our part. Had we means within our range and had we been able to come to the rescue of poor families, we might have had now within 100 or 200 families.

All this goes to show that the problem which caused such reluctance in some quarters to help ^{us} up, has been solved and that the question: whether the halfbreeds would come and stay or would not, is settled once and ^{for} ever. This state of affairs I humbly suggest, must be particularly gratifying for the Gov. when it be proved beyond civil that the money and land given by both the Gov. & the S. P. R. has fully realised the expectations of the donors. Were it not solely for those 8 families then the Government would be justified for having contributed to a certain extent to the realisation of our scheme -

— Accommodations given to settlers —

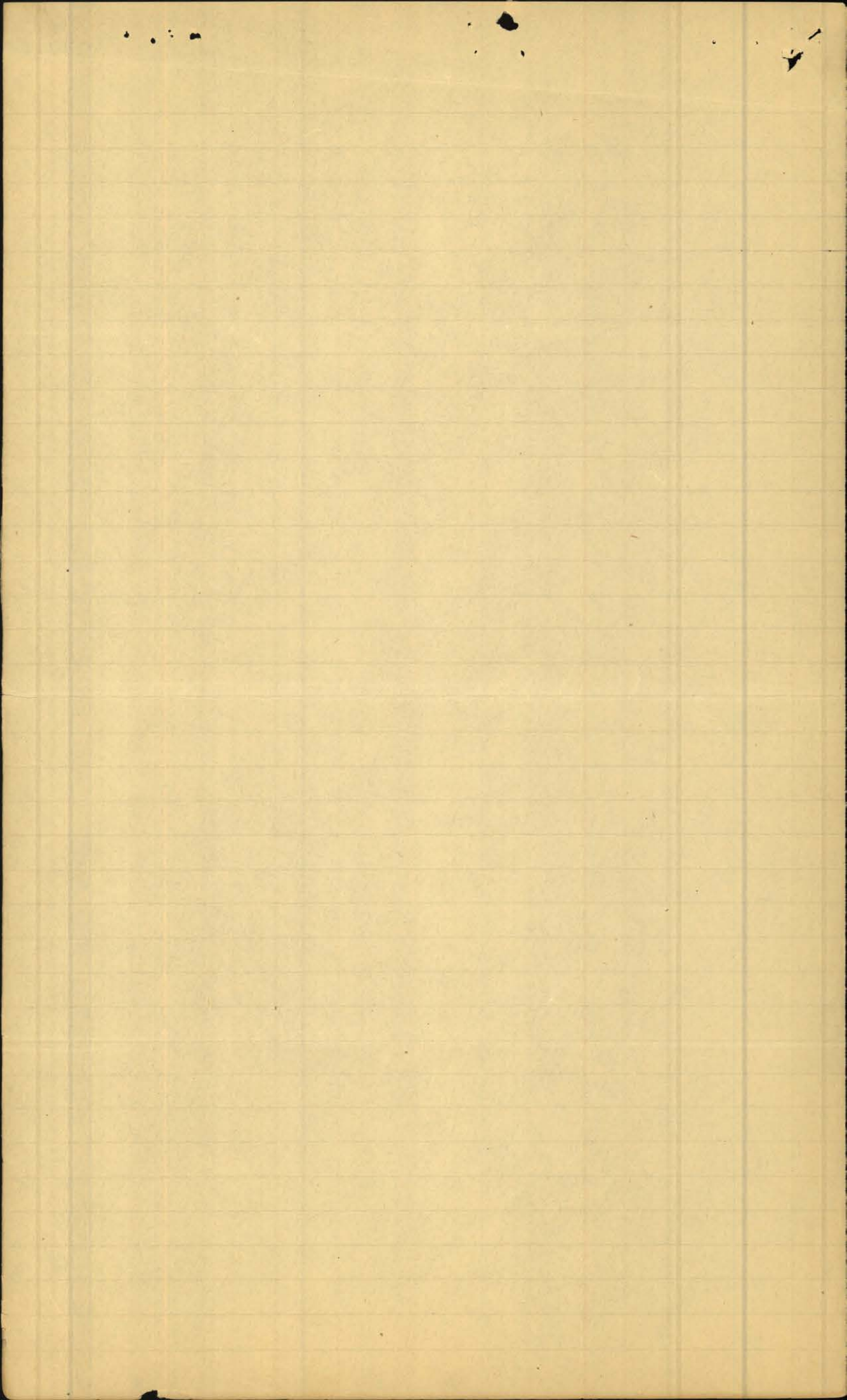
The promoters of this scheme have always been alive to the necessity of inducing the halfbreeds to go on farming and raising cattle as their best way to better their position actually and assure their independence in the future. One of the great draw back is their ignorance of properly farming and their inability to supply themselves with the agricultural implements resort to now always for the effective working of the farm. Therefore our object was to train them in the way of cultivating land in a proper manner and help them as much as we could in having the proper im-



implements to that effect. It is this we had in view when we
 approached the government both conservative and liberal
 in the special circumstances applying - for a grant of money
 to buy agricultural implements. Here is a detail of the
 different implements we bought out of the \$4000 dollars
 we got from the Government and private donations:

Ploughs	25
Harrows	15
Disk-Harrows	5
Seeders	3
Binders	3
Cultivators	2
Cracking machine	1
Seed grain	
Shingle machine	1
Planer	1
Grist-mill	1
Belts	
Smutter	1
Saw-mill	1

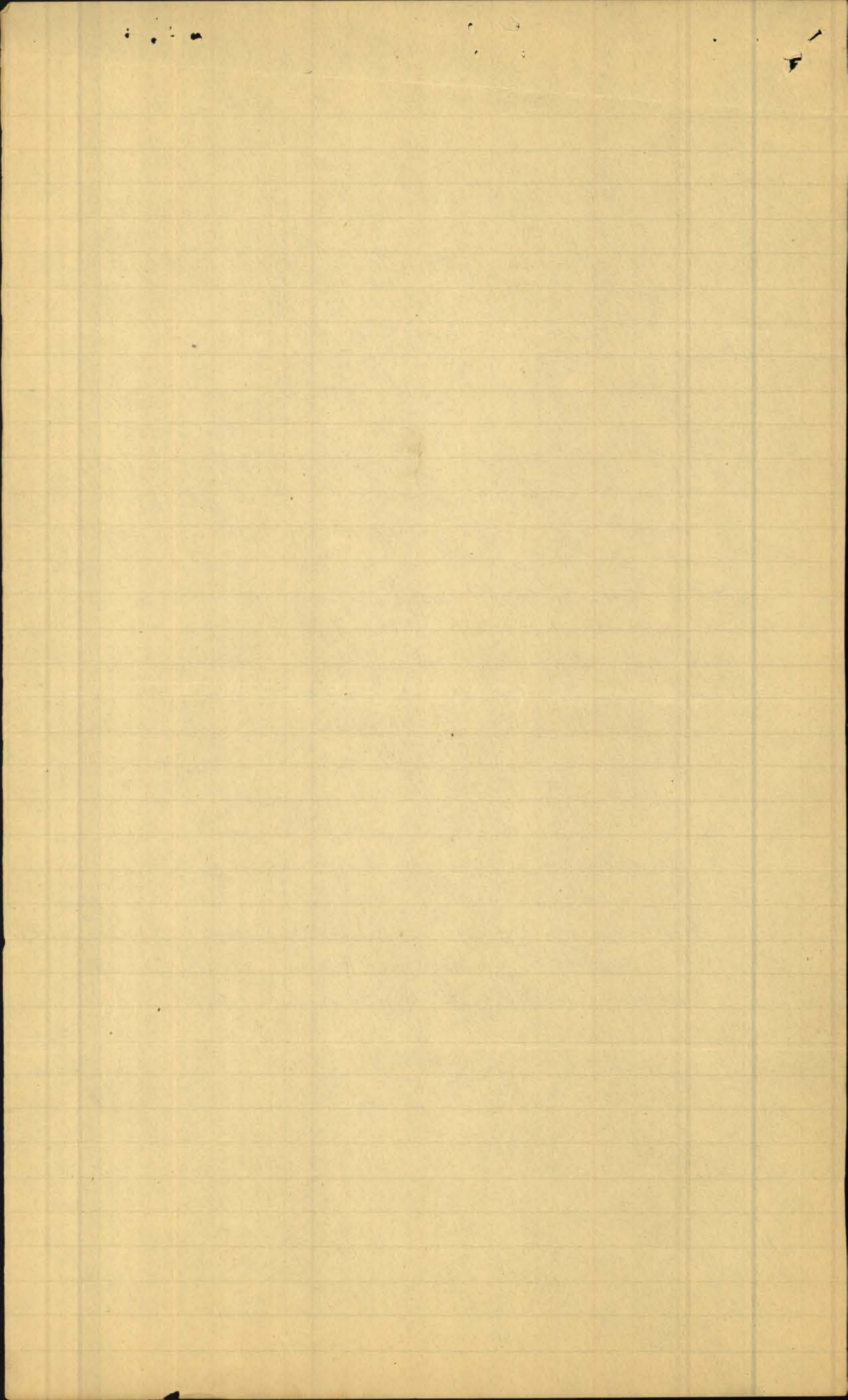
you will notice that the colony is supplied with machinery
 required for the good working of the farm. And I must
 say that the halfbreeds have not been slow to appreciate
 the advantages of having such agricultural implements and
 that they have constantly endeavoured to extend the limit
 of their ^{own} field as much as possible. These accommo-
 dations have done a great deal towards inducing them
 to stick to the working of the farm is their most effective
 factor to foster their material welfare. In fact they have
 made them regular and thrifty farmers. Here all
 the halfbreeds here instead of being by hundreds
 ignorant and villagous doing mischief exposed to every
 temptation becoming more and more a regular public nuisance
 are calling the assistance of civil authority to suppress



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public order, you would have a community or rather
a large population of good steady, honest farmers, being
a credit to the country instead of being a disgrace.

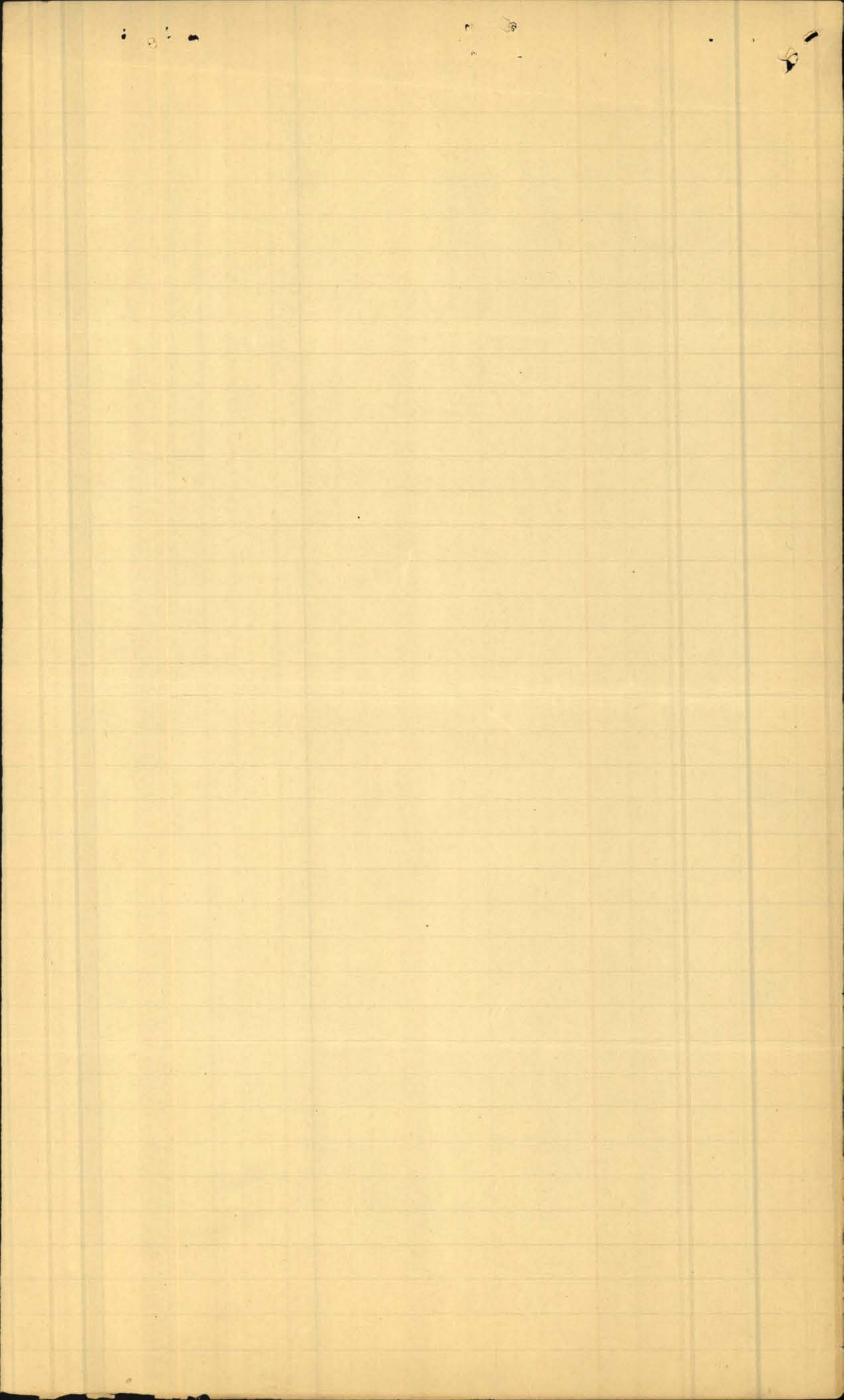
In the realisation of this scheme lays the key to solve the
problem of the halfbreed's question in which sooner or later
will summon all the wisdom and authority of the government
to deal with. For one cannot foresee without apprehension those
thousands of halfbreeds scattered all over, without a home, one
would say, living most of them around towns & cities, relying
for their lively hood on a mere chance, living from day to
day, without any hope or ambition of ever improving their
social position, away from any moral influence, but the fear
of the law which after all, is a poor factor to check evil passions,
when there is no other moral authority to counteract the in-
fluence of evil temptations; being in daily contact with the
new comer living happy, having respectable income and
comfortable home. on the land which once upon a time was their
own, who would dare say that this social inferiority of the
halfbreeds would not eventually bring about untold miseries
and serious difficulties for the government of the land? ~~7-4-0~~
a day, will come and this day is nearer at hand than
one would fancy, when the government shall have to
spend a large amount of money to build jails and assure
the security of law abiding citizen against the lawlessness
of the poor, destitute halfbreed rendered remorseless by the
continuous spectacle of his poverty and self degradation.

A man, or an association who would set to work to
cut ~~at its root~~ this evil at its root, solve this problem, secure
the public order, and do away before it is too late, with
these portentous and threatening evils; would he not be
considered as a benefactor of his country? and would not
the country and the government of his country be in duty
bound to do their utmost to help realising such a scheme,
to help out such a man? Well! This is what Father Lacombe
has in view; this is



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it is ~~the~~ what we are after, it is this we had in view when first we laid down amidst amidst many drawbacks and tremendous odds the foundation of our plan. And who would dare say that our scheme is a mere idle fancy, that cannot be realised? Have we not the experiment of four years to give the lie to those objections? If we have succeeded so far with ~~the~~³ families, why should we not succeed with 500 or 800 hundred? Those half breeds who are to come are not worst nor better than those already here for three years. We succeed with the latter, why should we not with the former?

But one might say: Well, it is very good, you succeed with fifty families - but how would you with 500 or more? It will take all the government's money to do it - To this I answer: not the least of it. I wish right here to state a fact which might give a clearer view of our scheme: we never had the idea of putting the half breeds on the same footing ~~(with us)~~ with the Indians. It is well for the government to issue rations to the Indians. But we never contemplate the idea of issuing rations to the half breeds however destitute they may be. First, because we could not afford to do it. Second: because we thought it was not expedient to do it: we wanted, from the start, the half breeds to be self-supporting - to find out ~~the~~ living in the colony the best they could through their own industry and energy. So we never issue rations or give any thing for nothing. Our scheme was on a business footing. To get something the half breeds must pay for it as in any other community. Of course we supply them as best as we could with the help of the Government and private donations with agricultural implements, because we knew that most of them could not afford to buy implements for themselves. But beside that; nothing else. So those who are weary at the expenses to be incurred for the feeding of the half breeds, let them dismiss that idea. There is but one thing for which we expect



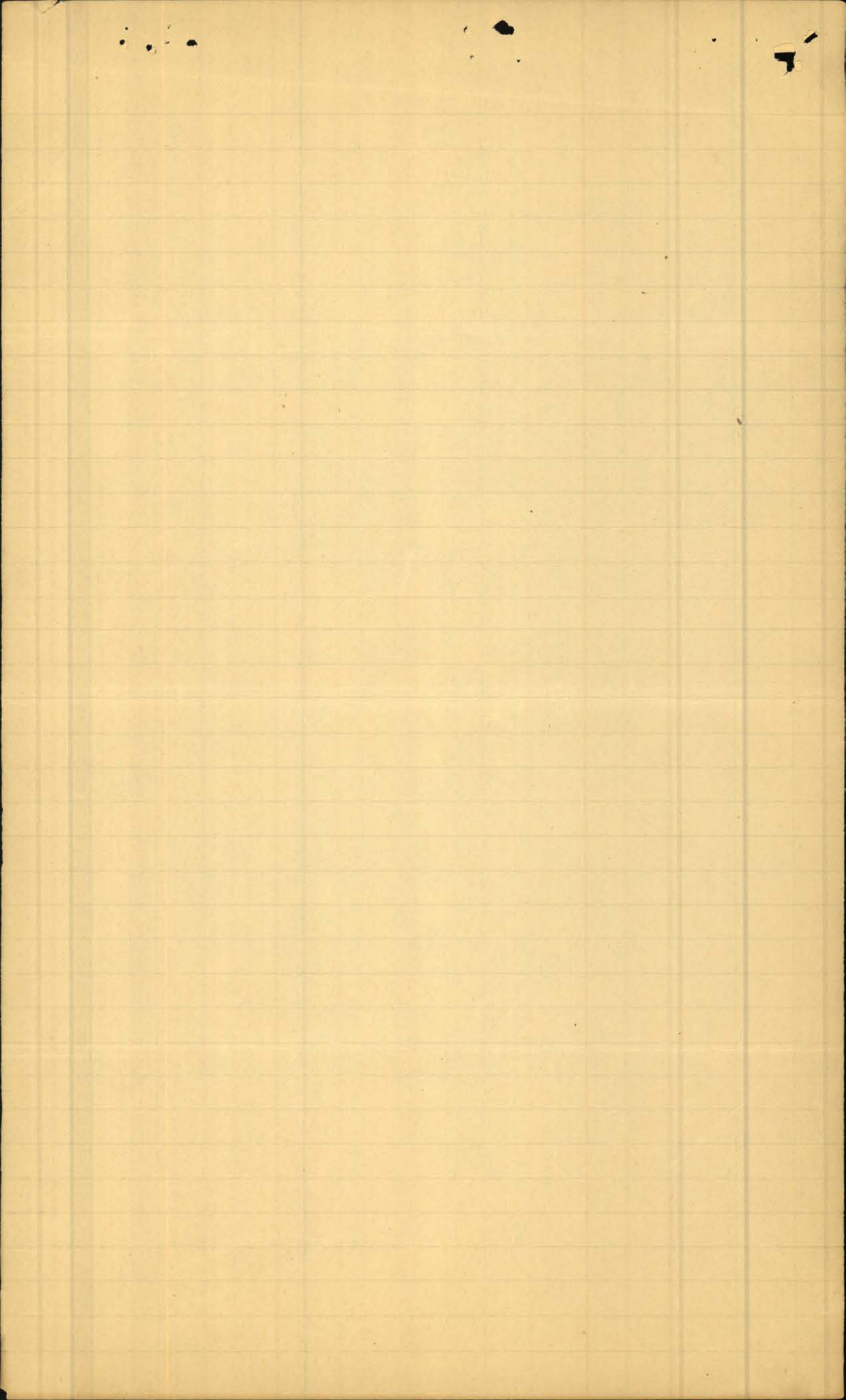
We expect the government to do something and I think that we are fully justified to hope that the government will favourably take our demand into consideration: I want to say: That the Government will give us an annual grant for our boarding school.

School

We rely a great deal for the success of our plan on the energy and good will of the old folks, but we rely still just as much upon the children who in a few years shall be settlers. The old folks have their us & customs, old ways of living, and one knows how hard it is to get rid of habits of many years standing. But here we do what we can, however with enough success to pay us for our troubles and expense of money. - But, as you said, we rely upon the next generation to bring about a full harvest of our exertions and for that, we are satisfied, that the only way to bring about this success, is a sound, practical education, and the great factor is the school and I say much emphatically: The Boarding school. Not the school of that.

In the first year I started a day school for the simple reason that I had no building for a boarding school. But I had no staff to attend the children and also as an experiment. Having been many years amongst the Indians on their reserves I witnessed the experience made by the Govt. in the matter of educating the Indians. I was then convinced they tried to educate the Indians through the means of day-school. I was then also certain the Govt. saw fit to use boarding schools instead of day-schools. For the simple reason that the day school had proved a regular failure. For the Indians could not be compelled upon the necessity of sending regularly their children to the school notwithstanding.

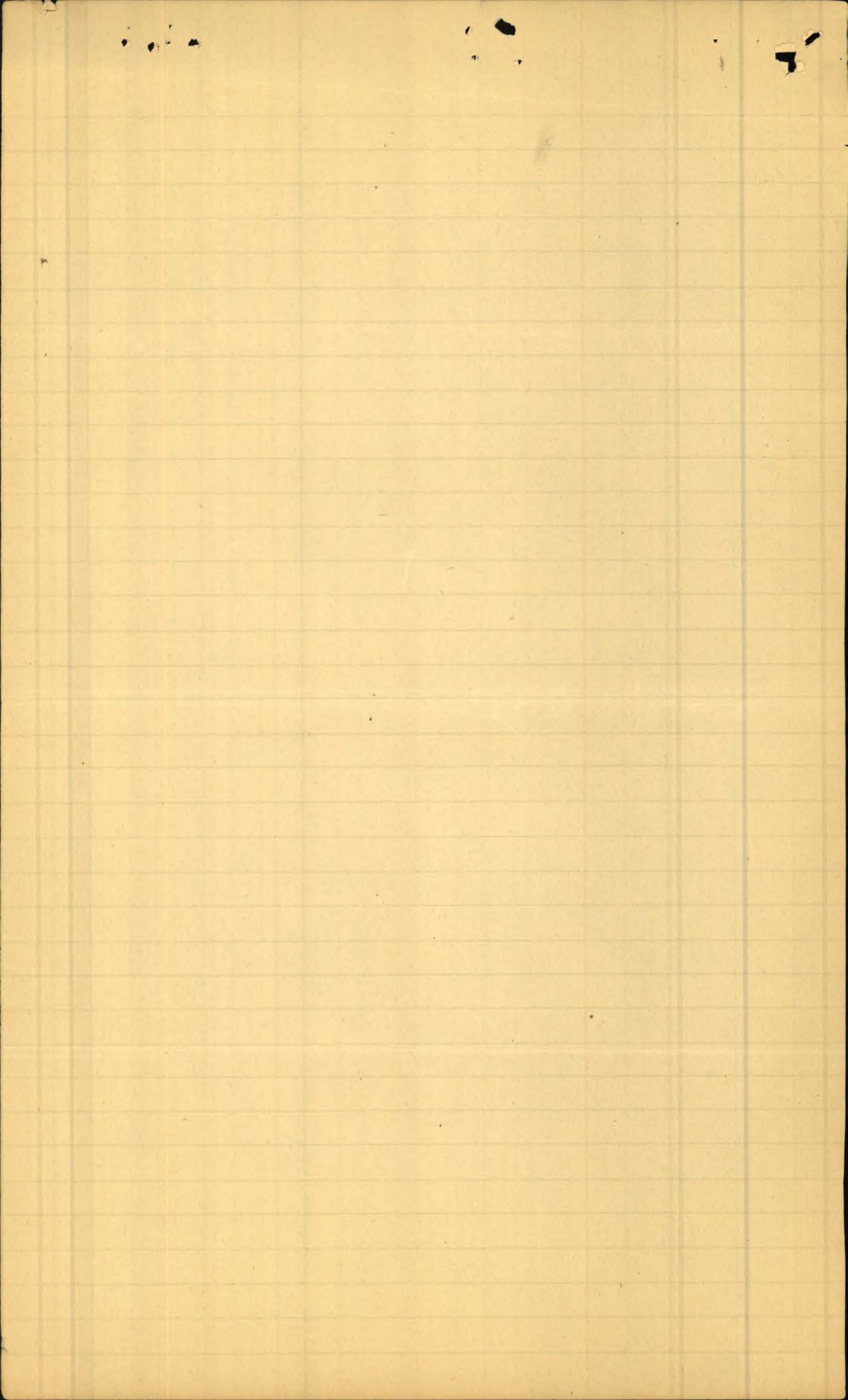
The stringent regulations of the Indian Department and the strenuous efforts of the Agents & Missionaries combined to be the



So the system of boarding school was resort to as a more practical and effective way of educating the Indians. It had been experimented by the Gov. on the Indian reserves, was also by me in our colony. Impossible to get the children to attend the school for many reasons first: want of authority on the part of parents over their children & property: The parents could not afford to cloth their children properly to attend the school. So finally: complete failure. We had to adopt the Government's system which is the most judicious & effective - Educate the children by means of boarding schools.

So in 1899 we were fortunate enough to secure for our boarding school a complete staff of Sisters to take charge of the children. And my house which was built the first year for my own use, was given over to the R.R. Sisters and we had 48 children as boarders. That is: we had to feed cloth them & keep them under our own supervision. This day, we have 64 children in our boarding school - our house being too small we had to lay the foundation of another larger school which is in its way of construction and will be finished in the course of next summer. This building measures 68 feet long by 36 wide with an addition in the center of 43 feet long by 36 - 2 stories on each side and 3 in the center with a french roof adding a great deal to its capacity of accommodation. When finished this building will be large enough to accommodate from 100 to 150 children. All this: the support of the boarding school and the building of another more capacious has been done to our own expenses - But I must admit that we are unable to go on with our work unless the Gov. come to our help and give us an annual grant for our boarding school. Failing to secure in our endeavours I must say that we will have to close our school in the spring and therefore give a dead blow to our colony. It is useless to establish a school district since the settlers cannot be taxed because they have not the ^{ownership} of their farms - they have only the use of it - And besides that, they are too poor to expect from them enough assistance to allow us to keep up the boarding school.

It is for this reason that we apply to the Government



Government for help in our dire necessity and hope
 that our appeal will receive a favourable answer.

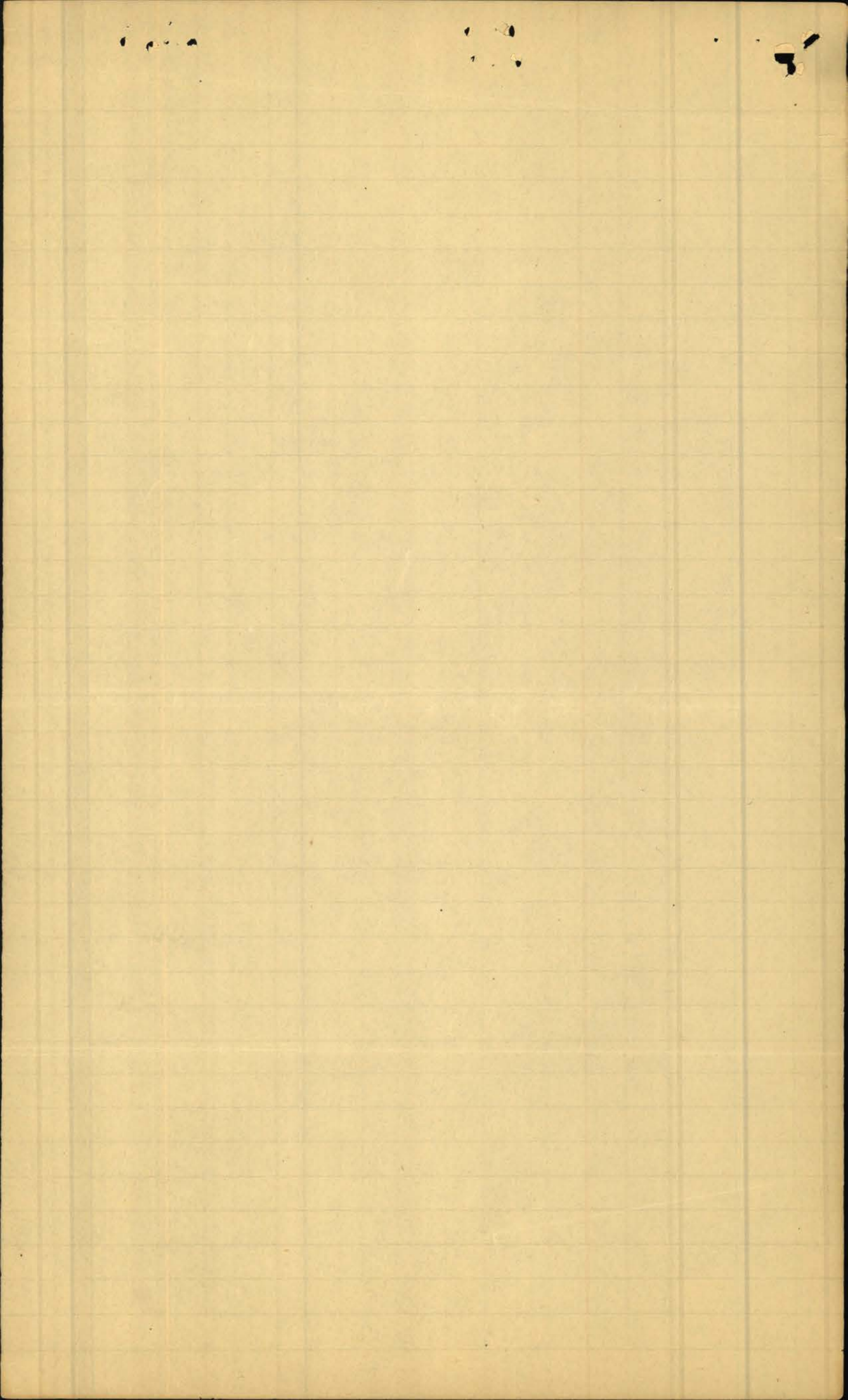
The Government has done already too much to let
 this scheme fall out, and I think we are to a certain extent
 justified in expecting that our appeal will be heard.

Undoubtedly this scheme has been conceived by
 Father Lacombe with the approval of his superiors, but
 the Government has in many circumstances has shown
 his appreciation and look with favor upon our plan.

Of course we could not expect that the Gov. would take
 this scheme in hand at the very beginning; it was well
 on the part of our public men to see whether this
 scheme could be realized. before committing themselves
 to the extent of voting large sum of money, but all the
 while they encouraged us to go ahead with our
 work and show that our scheme could be effec-
 tuated. I think we have done so far. I think we can
 prove beyond any doubt that our plan can be brought
 about; that it is safe for the Gov. to go a little further
 in the way of helping us by voting an annual grant
 for our boarding school without fear of being accused
 of rashness and shortsightedness.

Everyone who has favoured us with a visit has
 been astonished at the amount of work done in
 our colony. Mr. Ruttan's report of last year shows
 that we mean business. The Gentlemen at the head
 of the Halfbreed's commission have witnessed the progress
 made in our colony and their testimony could be used
 if needed to show that our work with proper help
 is bound to succeed. In fact many have expressed
 their surprise that the Gov. had not yet favored
 us with an annual grant for our school.

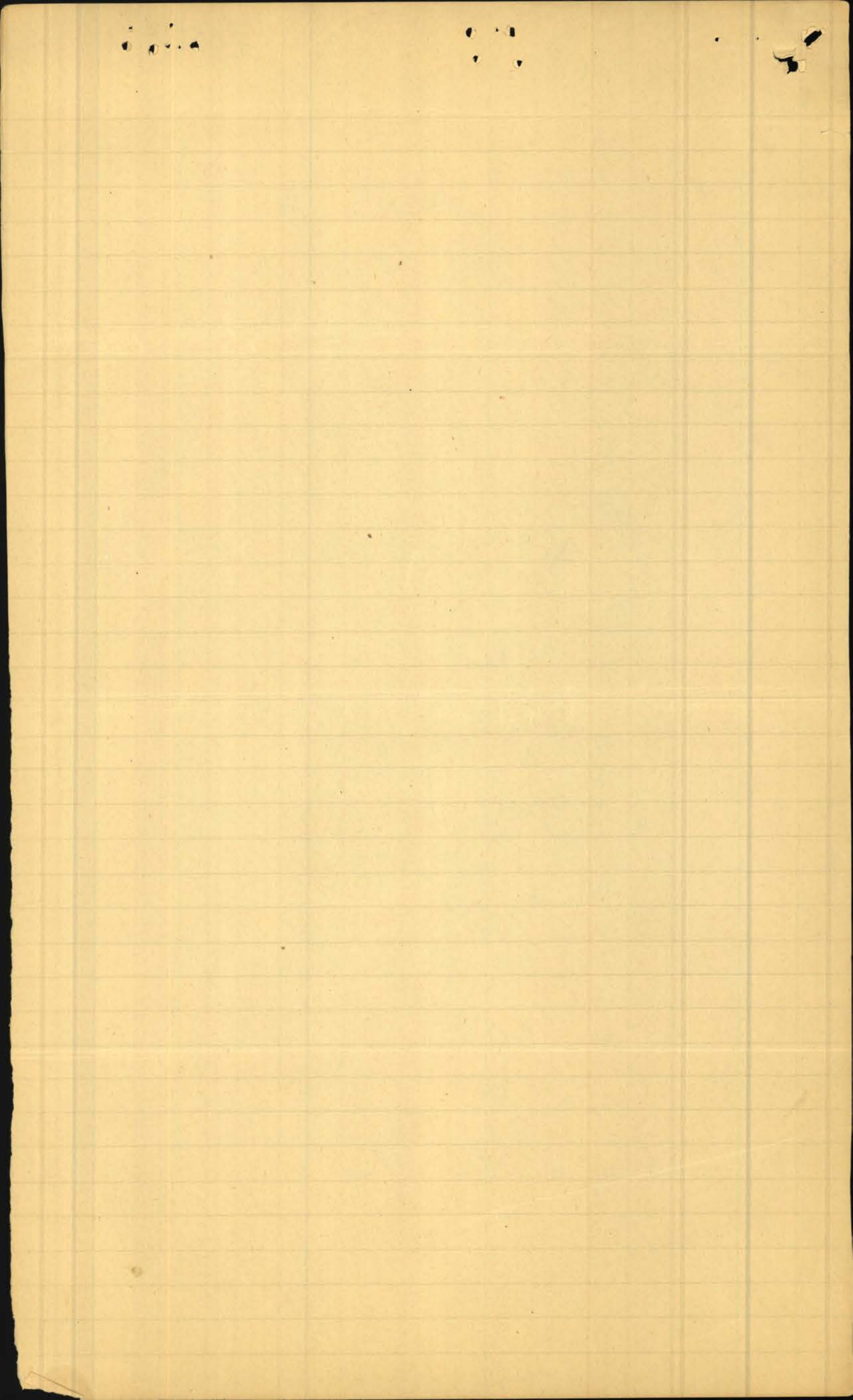
Will the Government then in view of the work
 already done, of the splendid prospect of carrying this to its
 ultimate



ultimate possibilities, remain unconcerned, and refuse to make good our appeal. I do not think so. Once more the Government, both Conservative & Liberal, has done too much to contemplate with indifference the closing of our school and finally the ruin of our scheme.

It must be born in mind that we are working for the public interest. It is not for us a ^{mere} question of nationality or of sectionalism. We have made it a question of public interest.

We are working for the welfare of the country. And as much as the Government is justified in spending money for the welfare of the Indians, or subsidizing private companies whose end is to foster the development of the material resources of the country, as much is the Government justified in favoring any measure that would have for ultimate result to better the ~~social~~ social and material position of a whole race. And who could lay the blame on the Government for any expenditure in that direction? The Conservative party? Why! it was the first to adopt our plan and help us to put it into operation. The Prime Minister at the time Sir Mackenzie Bowden was saying once to Father Lacombe: "Go ahead with your work and the Government won't be far behind you - for you it is a question of charity to a once prosperous nation but now on the brink of its ruin, for us it is question of philanthropy." Who could blame the Government but the shortsighted and narrow-minded people who would find fault with any governmental measure however needed it may be for the benefit of the country. Will the Gov. with the Cabinet who members have shown in so many circumstances so broad and splendid statesmanship fail to appreciate to its full measure the nature of our work and the splendid goal? I do not think so. And it is with the fullest confidence in you, Honorable Sir, and in your colleagues in the Gov. that I make



This appeal for an annual grant for our boarding school. The magnitude of our work justifies this appeal and the future welfare of a whole population demands that it get a favourable answer.

With my most sincere considerations,

I remain,

Honorable Sir,

Your humble servant,

J. A. Thériault, P^{te} ₅ m. i.

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES
OF ALBERTA
ACC. 71.220