

government, and further I have two of the most efficient interpreters that could be obtained. There stand Peter Ballenden and the Rev. John McKay."

His words were interpreted by Peter Ballenden.

Big Child answered, "We have our own interpreter, Peter Erasmus, and there he is. Mr. Clarke (he pointed directly at Clarke) advised me that Peter Erasmus was a good man to interpret the Cree language. Further than that, he recommended the man as the best interpreter in the whole Saskatchewan valley and plains. Why he did so, only he knows. On Clarke's advice, though I have no acquaintance with the man, I went to a great deal of trouble to fetch him here and though I know nothing of his efficiency, I am prepared to use his services. All our chiefs have agreed."

"Is that correct?" asked Governor Morris of Clarke.

"Peter Erasmus lives several hundred miles from here and I did not know that the chiefs had sent for him; therefore I hired these two other interpreters."

"It was quite unnecessary to send for the man," said the Governor. "We have two interpreters hired by the government and it is up to the government to provide the means of communication."

I had quietly interpreted these side conversations to the chief and he was prepared for an answer.

"Very good," said Mista-wa-sis, "you keep your interpreters and we will keep ours. We will pay our own man and I already see that it will be well for us to do so."

This latter statement by the chief, I interpreted to Morris directly, not waiting for Ballenden to misinterpret the chief's meaning.

"There is no need for you to assume this extra expense for an interpreter when the government is willing to pay for the interpretations," reiterated the Commissioner.

The chief replied rather heatedly, "Our man will interpret as well as yours. I can speak Blackfoot and I know what it takes to interpret. If you do not want the arrangement, there will be no talks. We did not send for you, you sent for us."

I was quick to translate the conversations before waiting for Ballenden's hesitant and slow interpretations. The Governor's party were huddled at the table in low conversation, none of which I could hear. In the meantime the chiefs gathered together and were about to leave the room when the Governor looked up and saw they were going to leave.

"All right," he said. "You can have your interpreter. My tent will be pitched on the prairie where we will meet. There will be a band playing to notify you of our presence."