

LOWER CANADA.

RETURN to an ADDRESS of the Honourable The House of Commons,  
dated 6 April 1840;—for,

COPY of a DESPATCH from the Right Honourable *Charles Poulett Thomson*  
to Lord *John Russell*, dated Montreal, the 13th day of March 1840,  
transmitting MEMORIALS from various Parties respecting the ESTATES of  
*St. Sulpice*.

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*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 10 April 1840.*

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(No. 68.)

COPY of a DESPATCH from the Right Hon. *C. Poulett Thomson* to  
Lord *John Russell*.

My Lord,

Government-House, Montreal,  
13 March 1840.

ON my return to Montreal, I found that considerable excitement had been raised among the inhabitants on the subject of the extinction of seigniorial rights and dues within this city and island, as provided for in the Ordinance passed by Sir John Colborne and the Special Council last year; the re-enactment of which, under the more extended powers of the Council, I had announced my intention to effect. The daily press had been almost exclusively employed in discussing this question, and various publications respecting it had made their appearance in other forms. At last a meeting was convened by the party opposed to the Ordinance, at which the accompanying Address to Her Majesty was adopted. This Address is signed by 2,200 persons, of whom I was informed, by the gentleman who presented it, that 1,500 were censitaires. From subsequent inquiries, however, I learn that this statement is erroneous, and that in reality not above 300 or 400 of the censitaires have affixed their names to it.

In the meantime, the opposite party were of course not idle, and I this day received the two Addresses, of which copies are enclosed, signed by 6,700 persons, among whom it is stated that a large majority of the censitaires of Montreal are numbered. These Addresses express approval of the terms offered by the Seminary and accepted by the Government, and pray that the Ordinance of last year may be passed into law.

It is not my intention in this despatch to re-open the long-disputed question as to the right of the Seminary to the seignior of Montreal. That question has, I think, been exhausted by the Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry of the 24th October 1836, who have shown in a conclusive manner that, although the legal right of the Seminary may not be perfect, their equitable claim admits of no dispute. This claim has since been recognized, both by the local and metropolitan government, and by the Imperial Parliament; by the former in the enactment and approval of the Ordinance of last year, and by the latter in the introduction into the statute 2 & 3 Vict. c. 53, of a clause specially permitting the re-enactment of the same Ordinance. Under these circumstances, and adverting to the opinion of the law officers of the Crown and your Lordship's instructions on this subject, I should not consider myself at liberty, even were I disposed, to refrain from proposing to the Special Council an Ordinance for concluding the agreement entered into between the Seminary and the local government. But I am strongly impressed with the necessity of bringing this matter to a speedy close, in order to put a stop to dissensions which must irritate and inflame the public mind. Hitherto the Province has been free from religious dissensions, but I have ob-

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C. P. Thomson to  
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