

House, the desire of some of the hon. members for papers will be more urgent than ever. They will not like the papers which are yet to come down any more than they like those which have been brought already; and when they have seen them all, the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake), will say: "These are not the papers at all," and he will ask for the papers which he said were lying 'mouldering unopened' in our offices. As an illustration of the unreasonableness with which some of these demands have been made upon us, let me call the attention of the House to a single instance. On the 17th of March an hon. member moved:

"That an Address to His Excellency the Governor-General be presented for a full and complete report of the trial of Thomas Scott, charged with 'treason-felony' at Regina; giving the evidence for the Crown and defence, together with addresses of counsel and charge of the Stipendiary Magistrate. Report of the trial and sentence of the half-breed prisoners at Regina for 'treason-felony,' together with the evidence submitted to the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court in mitigation of sentence, and addresses of counsel for the prisoners."

These papers, connected with the trials that took place afterwards, had a very doubtful relevancy to the case; but the point I am making now is that when the Address of this House was asked for on the 17th of March for these papers, they had already been on the table 48 hours. We have not the advantage on this side, perhaps, of hearing all that goes on in this House, but we can imagine, in view of that illustration and of some facts we do know, how true and appropriate this comment by a bystander is upon this cry for papers:

"I was amused to-day at Mr. ———. He was tearing the Government to tatters for not having the papers down. 'Where is the diary of Louis Riel?' he cried, and then aside to Laurier, 'Is that down?' 'No,' whispered back Laurier. Then Mr. ——— became furious in his denunciations because it wasn't down."

I think, Sir, that at an earlier stage of this discussion, the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Amyot) saw the difficulty the House would meet in the discussion of a question of this kind, and in receiving and acting upon the doctrine that this House was to be a court of appeal; for the hon. member declared almost in so many words, that he and his friends were justified in treating this case as an exceptional case, because it came from the North-west Territories; and the hon. member read to the House a section of the Act which provided that the report of a capital case tried in the North-west Territories should come to the Executive.

Mr. MILLS. Hear, hear.

Mr. THOMPSON (Antigonish). I shall read—especially as an hon. member of my own profession on the other side of the House says "hear, hear"—two sections of the law—the section bearing on cases in the North-West Territories and the section bearing on cases in the various Provinces, and will ask what the difference is. The general law, taken from the Act of 1873, applying to every Province in this Dominion, is:

"The Judge before whom such prisoner has been convicted shall forthwith make a report of the case, through the Secretary of State for Canada, for the information of the Governor, and the day on to be appointed for carrying the sentence into execution shall be such as in the opinion of the Judge will allow sufficient time for a signification of the Governor's pleasure before such day."

Now, the provision relating to the North-West is this:

"When any person is convicted of a capital offence, and is sentenced to death, the stipendiary magistrate shall forward to the Minister of Justice full notes of the evidence, with his report upon the case, and the execution shall be postponed from time to time by the stipendiary magistrate, if found necessary, until such report is received, and the pleasure of the Governor General thereon is communicated to the Lieutenant-Governor."

Now, the only difference between the two sections is this: First, it is provided that the judge in a North-West case shall furnish full notes of the evidence—and the hon. member laid stress upon that point. I can only say to him that, full as the notes of the evidence are in this and in every capital case coming from the North-West, they are not one iota fuller than the reports of capital cases which we receive from the Provinces; and as regards the postponement of the day of the execution of the sentence, although the power is specially conferred upon the stipendiary magistrate in the North-West Territories, it is still fully competent to the judges in the other Provinces to respite until the pleasure of the Governor is made known. The provision making it mandatory upon the stipendiary magistrate to postpone in the case of North-West trials was inserted, I believe, in consequence of the remoteness of the country and the difficulties of communication; but in practical working the two provisions are identical, and a case coming from the North-West Territories has no more connection with the functions of this House or the politics of the country than a case coming from the Province of Quebec or the Province of Nova Scotia. Before I refer to the criticisms which were passed upon the trial of the case, and as one of the preliminary observations I wish to make, I desire to reply to a remark which was made by the hon. member for Hochelaga (Mr. Desjardins) the other evening. Replying to a remark of the Minister of Public Works, he asked how the Minister of Inland Revenue, and how the Minister of Justice could reconcile with truth the statement which had been made in this House that there had been a change in public opinion in the Province of Quebec? He referred to the meetings which had taken place at St. Jerome and St. Colombe, at which I had the honor of assisting, and at the latter of which my hon. colleague, the Minister of Inland Revenue, was with me. The hon. gentleman wanted to know what we had to say, after those meetings, of the state of feeling in the Province of Quebec? I answer that if we are to judge from what we saw, there had been a great change of feeling in the Province of Quebec. The people were disposed to listen to reason, to argument, and to truth, and there was no more passion evinced at those meetings than at any meetings of equal size called in any other part of the country, for the discussion of public questions. If I had to judge from the reports we saw in the press, I should have to give the hon. gentleman a different answer; but at present I shall testify from what I saw, not from what I read in the papers afterwards. I should think the hon. gentleman would have hesitated to ask me, in the presence of this House, what I thought of the change of public feeling in the Province of Quebec, when we have so many