

House of Commons Debates

FOURTH SESSION—SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

SIR JOHN THOMPSON, M.P.

ON

SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES

OTTAWA THURSDAY, 26TH APRIL, 1894

SIR JOHN THOMPSON. I feel that it is due to the House, considering the great interest manifested in this question by the discussion we have had here during several days, that I should express myself briefly upon the points brought out. There is reasonableness in the desire of hon' gentlemen to know the views of the Government, in so far as they can with propriety be expressed on a question of great importance like this, even as a mere motion to bring down the papers. At the same time, I beg to say, in a preliminary way, that in my judgment it is better that the question, at the present time, should be very sparingly discussed; and, as far as I am concerned, I beg to intimate to the House, at the outset, that I do not intend to enter upon any exhaustive discussion of it to-day, nor even to make what I would consider, myself, a full defence of the position of the Government. The reason for that is perfectly obvious. To a great extent the question, in so far at least as it relates to the North-west, is one under consideration; and at this stage what may be incautiously said with regard to it may affect seriously the result of the consideration which the subject is receiving. As members of the House have become already aware, through the press and through the observations in this House, the Government have made a request to the Lieutenant

Governor of the Territories to convey to the Legislature of the Territories the great desire felt by His Excellency and his advisers—and, I am sure, very widely shared in this country—that the Legislature of the North-west Territories should reconsider the whole subject of education, with a view to giving redress to any grievances which exist there, and with a view likewise to giving any safeguards which are needed in order to make any portion of the people feel that their rights are well safeguarded and preserved. If, therefore, at the present time, members of the Government especially, should enter upon an elaborate discussion of the question, or upon a review of all that has transpired in this debate, we might find that the position of one side or the other had been seriously prejudiced by that course. For example, if we committed ourselves to opposition to the Ordinance of the Territories we might find that no serious grievances existed worthy of being made the basis of a complaint to the Legislature; on the other hand, if we warmly espoused the statement of grievances that has already been made, we might raise a feeling of resentment among the people of the Territories on the ground that we had, to a great extent, prejudged the case before the complaints could have been considered by the legislature. For these reasons, I trust