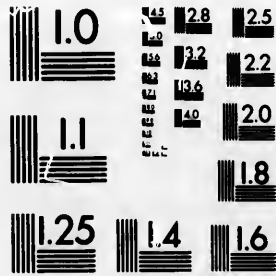


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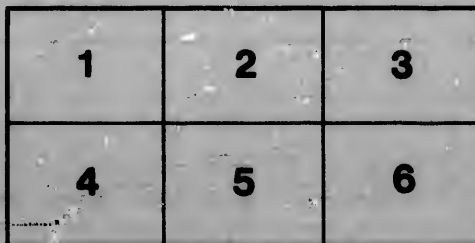
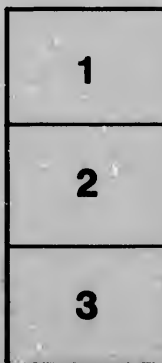
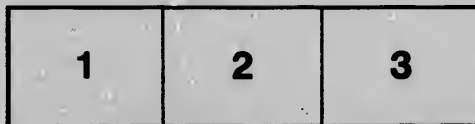
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# House of Commons Debates

FOURTH SESSION—SIXTH PARLIAMENT.

SPEECHES OF HON. EDWARD BLAKE, M.P.,

ON THE

NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES ACT.

TUESDAY, 6TH MAY, 1890.

Mr. BLAKE. I think it impossible to attach too much importance to the point on which the hon. member for West Assiniboia (Mr. Davin) has just enlarged. We are proposing to make a departure from the principles of responsible government, as we understand them, in a most important particular. I admit that it is difficult to deal with the exigency otherwise than it is dealt with by this Bill, without responsible government. The principle, as I understand it, is that, with respect to the expenditure of public moneys, it is the Crown that initiates, not the Assembly. The Assembly is supposed to be a check, a guard, to keep the drag on; that is the function of the popular body. I quite agree that eminent statesmen, not the rising, but dealing with actual results in late years in the mother country, have pointed out how far the English House of Commons has departed from the ancient traditions; how far it has ceased to be a bulwark and support to the Administration in matters of prudence and economy in public expenditure. But, none the less, I hold it to be the most important ingredient in securing economy, and also good direction, in public expenditure, that there shall be an initiative somewhere else than in the popular assembly, and, deeply as I differ from the hon. member for West Assiniboia (Mr. Davin) as to his characterisation of the expenditures that have taken place in this House, or rather with the sanction of this House, I say they are, beyond all comparison, better, more prudent, and wiser than they would have been if such a system as we are proposing to give the North-West Territories had existed here. We have had a few instances, I am glad to say only a few, of attempted departure from that system. There have been perhaps three cases, three only occur to my mind at this moment, in which select committees have substantially, though not nominally, been allowed to deal with old claims in order, I am afraid, that the Executive might escape the responsibility, with the inevitable result that the claims were allowed; but, subject to those trifling exceptions, which only mark the rule, we have observed the rule. We are not without experience in this matter in the old Province. In the early

days of the old Legislature of Canada, prior to 1840, when, as you know, we had a system which was not a system of responsible government, although there were Ministers representing the Crown, at that time, as Mr. Bourinot says:

"All applications for pecuniary assistance were addressed directly to the House of Assembly, and every Governor, especially Lord Sydenham, has given his testimony as to the injurious effect of the system. The Union Act of 1840 placed the initiation of many votes in the Crown, and this wise practice was always strictly followed to 1867, when the new Constitution came into force."

And we know the language of the present Constitution provides expressly:

"It shall not be lawful for the House of Commons to adopt or pass any vote, resolution, address or Bill for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue, or of any tax or impost, to any purpose that has not been first recommended by a Message of the Governor General, in the Session in which such vote, resolution, address, or Bill is proposed."

A similar provision is inserted in the Constitution of each Provincial Legislature. Now, as I have said, I see the difficulty in which hon. gentlemen opposite were plunged when they came to deal with this question, because they have got one or two alternatives to adopt. They have to adopt the language we find here, which says:

"The expenditure of such portion of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for the Territories, as the Governor in Council may instruct the Lieutenant Governor to expend, by and with the advice of the Legislative Assembly."

That is to say, the advice of the Assembly is to rule. They had that course open to them. Or the course was open to them of providing that the Lieutenant Governor should send down his Message, and without that Message it should not be competent for the Legislative Assembly to deal with the question at all. There you would at once be face to face with irresponsible rule. The Legislative Assembly cannot condemn the Lieutenant Governor, or dismiss him, or alter his position in any way, his advisory council is not responsible; and you are brought face to face with a difficulty which must subsist for the want of responsible government. But, on the other hand, what are we doing by the proposed plan? We are deliberately initiating that system which was

deliberately abandoned in the early history of the old Province, where it was tried with injurious results, which has been deliberately rendered impossible by the constitutional Act, as to this Assembly and as to the Provincial Legislatures, and which is decidedly opposed to the spirit of the British Constitution. The hon. gentleman from Assiniboia has told us of the method of the expenditure of the scanty funds, which up to this time the Legislative Assembly has been allowed to expend. It is not an entirely new method of expenditure, because, I happen to know, that in the Province of Nova Scotia there are certain moneys called "road moneys," the disposal of which has been placed under the control of members; but, even there, the question of deciding as to how much shall go to each county is decided according to constitutional principle, while the detailed application has been left, with very injurious results, to the local members. But the hon. gentleman tells us, that in this case the total fund to be disposed of is divided by the number of constituencies, and each member is given his equal share. Of course, it is impossible to suppose, that in a territory like the North-West, in which, with the best possible desire, you cannot have equal areas with equal wants all over, that an equal division of money all over is a just division. Why, it is beyond all possibility that such an arrangement can be just, and it is important that where scanty funds are available should be expended for such objects as may on the advice of responsible Ministers, be submitted to the Assembly and as shall by the Assembly be deemed to be for the general good. It might be that a particular district might be infinitely more benefited in reality by the whole fund being expended outside of it, in an adjoining district; its own immediate local interests might be better served by a large expenditure on a bridge or other means of public communication, than by being frittered away in the district itself. Such a system as this is one which certainly does not encourage us in the scheme of placing more funds in this present fashion under the control of the Assembly. I think, therefore, we are face to face with a very serious question when we are engaged in the work commenced in 1875, that high and noble work for any Legislative Assembly, the task of improving, as we were engaged then in the task of inaugurating, the institutions under which a large territory, to be inhabited at some future day, we hope, by millions, may grow up and prosper.

#### On section 3,

Mr. BLAKE. It occurred to me that it is a very awkward name that is proposed. If you do not use a name that is easily spoken, it will not be used at all. I felt some difficulty about making a change, but it occurs to me that if a change is to be made it would be a much easier mouthful to say, Western Canadian Territories.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. The name might be changed to Western Territories. Objection has been taken to the word "North" as conveying to the general public the idea of an arctic condition, that the country was not very like the American North-West, but was further north, and possessed a more severe climate, a shorter summer and a

longer winter, and for these reasons it was suggested to drop the word "North."

Mr. BLAKE. It seems to me that the old name, after all, was not devoid of truth, and the change proposed will not alter the thermometer in winter or in summer in any way whatever. My impression is that any announcement made to the world at large, and particularly to the immigrating public, with the view of persuading them that they are not going to cold winters in the North-West, will not have any effect on any sensible man.

#### On section 5,

Mr. BLAKE. As long as we have not decided to alter fundamentally the system which exists, and which it is proposed by this Bill to continue, I do not see, in the absence of any complaint from the Assembly, why we should interfere with the three legal experts who do not vote. The only complaint that can be made is that which the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy) suggested, that their speeches are rather long.

Mr. McCARTHY. There is a petition against them.

Mr. BLAKE. I was not aware of that; I did not find, on looking at the petitions, that there was any complaint against them. My own impression strongly is, that if a small executive council were granted to the Territories, which, I think, ought to be granted, the experts should disappear; and my opinion is that the people of the country themselves would find it necessary to elect to the Assembly a certain limited number of gentlemen experienced in the law, so that their Assembly might not be a *parliamentum indoctum*, as a well-known Parliament was, from which, I believe, the lawyers were altogether excluded. They would thus obtain as much trained assistance as they thought necessary; and if they chose to do without it, nobody but themselves would be the sufferers. With reference to the number of members, I was not in a position, of course, to hear the whispers of the North-West; but I heard what were not whispers here. I heard the hon. member for Saskatchewan, at an early period of the Session, declare that complaints were made with reference to the distribution of districts in the North-West, and particularly with reference to those in the region he represents; and, if necessary, some remedy ought to be applied to that. If there be a subject with which the Territorial Assembly might be supposed to be better competent to deal than any other, it is in what way the country should be divided for local representation. How is it possible for us to form an intelligent appreciation of that subject? We have to take upon trust the statement of the Minister who studies the subject, with his knowledge of the country from the maps, and the statements of the four members from the North-West Territories. We cannot judge how things are. We cannot give an intelligent vote upon the question of the arrangement of districts. They are, in a country of that description, arrangements which require an intelligent acquaintance, not merely with the census, but with the prospects of growth and with the particular regions in which those prospects are brightest. It is an evil to change frequently, and in this country we know that, in older days, when changes were made, we recognised the view that newer sections—as, for

example, the County of Bruce and the County of Renfrew—should be, as regarded population, over-represented for a while, because we expected that an influx of population would redress the difference. That is all a matter to be best considered by the Assembly itself, and, therefore, I think that the readjustment of the electoral districts might be well left to the Assembly. The only question is whether we should give them the power to increase the number of districts, and the only difficulty in regard to that is what the First Minister has suggested, that they may unduly increase the number of districts because it is a popular thing to do, because there are many who in small districts might thus obtain positions of prominence, and possibly of emolument, which they otherwise could not. If we think it necessary so far to hamper and restrain the action of the Assembly, that difficulty might be remedied by providing a maximum number which would cover all demands for increased representation for the next few years. We might say the number should be thirty. We might give the new Assembly, elected after the people have had that question before them, the power to readjust the districts, while not giving them the power to increase the number of districts beyond a certain maximum.

Mr. BLAKE. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Davin) seems to think that until he came here no one took any interest in the North-West, but the fact is that the North-West owes whatever it possesses of responsible government to the wisdom and presence of my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie), who, in 1875, proposed a measure which contained the germ of all the representative institutions the North-West has to-day. The hon. gentleman may learn, what he evidently does not know, that for many years gentlemen on this side of the House pressed upon the Government, by speech and by vote, the necessity of extending the representative principle here to the North-West of responsible government: and I am sure that, whatever doubts and fears we may have had before, we may now congratulate ourselves upon the inestimable blessings conferred upon the whole of Canada, upon the North-West, and upon ourselves, in having introduced my hon. friend to this House. He says in the North-West there has been an *immigration d'élite*, and we here have the *élite* of the *élite*, and we may judge what is left there by the sample which they send us. But the hon. gentleman is quite right. So far as the emigration from Ontario is concerned, and I presume it is the same from the other Provinces, there can be no doubt that by a process of natural selection they have got amongst the best and most energetic men that were to be found among us; and I have no doubt whatever that that immigration, taken on the whole, is of a very superior character—just as, upon the same principles, the upper Province was originally settled. I am old enough to remember the character of those settlers, at least of some of them, living at an extreme old age, and I can bear testimony that a great many of the earlier settlers who came to this country at a period when it was very different from what it is to-day, when there was no assisted emigration, no steamships, no cleared lands, when bears and Indians were supposed to be the attractions of that country, were men of the first rank. Those circumstances

indicate of themselves that the early settlers were men of superior force of character, men, I am afraid, we must confer with humility, better, upon the average, than many of their sons and grandsons are. So, in degree, though not to the same extent, is the character of the immigration to the North-West; and we must not, of course, keep such people as that in leading strings; we must deal with them as men of capacity, as men of will, as men of resolution and ability; and we must trust them with their own fortunes, confident that if they make mistakes, as it is they who will suffer the consequences, so they will be able to repair their errors. Such is the general principle upon which we ought to deal with them, and in that view I am disposed—not forgetting that we have certain responsibilities towards them and towards Canada until such period as we give them full Provincial rights—I am disposed largely to listen with great respect and attention and deference to the decided and clearly expressed voice of the Territories themselves as to what is for their advantage.

Mr. BLAKE. The right hon. gentleman is quite correct in the two statements of fact he has made. It is quite true that the right hon. gentleman gave to Manitoba its present popular Constitution; it is also true that the right hon. gentleman gave the North-West Territories their representation in the House of Commons, and obtained his four lambs, as he called them, but I prefer to call them sheep, and I will not say of what color. *Reverons à nos moutons*. I should like to tell the reason why the right hon. gentleman gave popular institutions to Manitoba, and gave representation in this House to the North-West Territories. That supervened which generally does supervene before a Tory reform. There was a rebellion first. The right hon. gentleman gave the people of Manitoba a paternal Constitution; he sent up there a Lieutenant Governor, who never got into the country; and an alien Council, which could not get in either. The people rose in rebellion against him; and then he came down here and gave them, forsooth, provincial rights. And he now claims credit for having given that which they obtained at the point of the bayonet. So much for Manitoba. Then as to the Territories. Year after year we in this House, sitting on this side of the House, inveighed against the absence of representation from the Territories. We pointed out their distance, their remoteness, the murmurs of complaint which came from that country, and we said it was absolutely essential there should be a safety-valve, at all events, for them, and guidance for ourselves. We did not indeed know then how extensive, or expansive, or expensive, that safety-valve would be; but we called for a safety-valve for them, for light and information for ourselves. We asked for it, we called for it, we pressed for it, we moved for it. Deaf ears were presented to us on those benches. Another rebellion came, and the year after his second rebellion the hon. gentleman gave representation to the North-West Territories.

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