

any remarks I may be enabled to offer will proceed rather from a sense of duty to my constituents and to my country than from any hope of changing the views or influencing the vote of any Honourable Member. What is Responsible Government? I have been led to believe that considerable confusion of ideas exists upon this point; and I was the more impressed with this upon listening to the remarks of the Honourable Member for Cariboo, a few days ago. That Honourable gentleman compared the introduction of Responsible Government into this Colony to applying the machinery of the Great Eastern to a dairy churn. Now, Sir, Responsible Government is not a quantity; it is a principle; and as such it is applicable to the Great Eastern or to a dairy churn,—capable of being applied to a tiny lady's watch. It is a principle admirably adapted to the largest communities in the Old World. It is a principle admirably adapted to the smallest communities in the New World. It is a principle that may be worked out in a cabinet of a hundred. It is a principle which may be successfully worked out in a cabinet of three. Without it no Government can, in the true sense, be called a people's Government. All true Governments derive their power from the people. All true Governments must be responsible to the people. Responsible Government is, then, a principle which may be adapted to, and successfully worked out in, this community. If this proposition is incontrovertible, which I maintain it is, who can say that British Columbia is not large enough for Responsible Government? There are men here of ability to form a Cabinet. The Cabinet of the day is, under the responsible system, the Government, just so long as it has the confidence of a majority of the representatives of the people in the House. In the event of that confidence being lost, one of two courses is open: The Ministers place their resignation in the hands of the Governor, who commonly calls upon a prominent member of the opposition to form a Ministry; or, if they believe that the House does not truly represent the people upon the question at issue, they advise a dissolution and an appeal to the country. What would Responsible Government have to do here? In dealing with this question I, of course, assume British Columbia to be a Province of the Dominion; and, I confess, that were it otherwise, were it proposed to remain a separate Colony, the case would be different. I do not say that even then I would not advocate the introduction of Responsible Government, but that advocacy might be less hearty and less firm. Regarding British Columbia as a Province of the Dominion, the chief objections are removed by the removal to Ottawa of all those larger and more complex questions of legislation which might threaten to crack the brain of our embryo statesmen. The Local Government would alone have to deal with local questions, and thus it would have very simple duties to discharge—scarcely more difficult, in fact, than those falling within the functions of a large municipality in Canada. Are the people in British Columbia fit for it? And here I would express my sincere regret that the representative of Her Majesty in this Colony has felt it to be his duty to pronounce an adverse opinion. I will yield to no one, either in this House or out of it, in entertaining a high respect for His Excellency, for his talent, experience, and honesty of purpose; but I do say,—and I say it with respect, more in sorrow than in anger,—that I cannot think his knowledge of the people of this Colony was such as to justify him in so early pronouncing upon their fitness for self-government.

Hon. ATTORNEY-GENERAL.—The Honourable Member for New Westminster will, I am sure, pardon the interruption, but I feel it to be my duty to deny that the Governor ever said, or that any member of the Government has said or thought, that the people of British Columbia are unfit for self-government.

Hon. MR. ROBSON.—I thank the honourable and learned Attorney-General, and I appreciate his motives. There is no one less disposed than myself to speak or write one word calculated to weaken the hands of the Government, or cause the well-deserved popularity of His Excellency to wane; but yet I cannot conceal from myself the fact that a mere play upon words will not mend matters. Whether it is the Colony or its inhabitants that has been pronounced unfit for self-government, the practical results remain the same; and it is with these we alone are concerned. From my own knowledge of the people, and it is the result of eleven years' contact with them, I have no hesitation in saying they are pre-eminently fitted for self-government. There are scores of men in this country with calloused palms and patched garments, well fitted by natural endowments, education, and practical experience in the working of Responsible Government in other Colonies, to occupy seats either in the Legislative Assembly or in the Cabinet of British Columbia. He who would judge of the intelligence and mental acquirements of men in this Colony by outward appearance and by present occupation, certainly would not judge righteous judgment. The opinion of His Excellency the Governor to the contrary not-