

withstanding, I holdly assert that the people of British Columbia are fit for Responsible Government. Do they want it? Doubtless there are those in this House, possibly even in the unofficial ranks, who will deny that the people of British Columbia really desire to have Responsible Government under Confederation. It is sometimes difficult to account for divergence of opinion; but I venture to think that I have the weight of both argument and evidence on my side when I assert, as I do, that the great body of the people—certainly an overwhelming majority—do earnestly and intelligently desire that form of government. It is difficult to believe that any man who has given due thought to the subject can possibly hesitate. Look at the position this Colony would occupy under Confederation, without the full control of its own affairs—a condition alone attainable by means of Responsible Government. While the other Provinces only surrender Federal questions to the Central Government, we would surrender *all*. While the other Provinces with which it is proposed to confederate upon equal and equitable terms retain the fullest power to manage all Provincial matters, British Columbia would surrender that power. Her local as well as her national affairs would virtually be managed at Ottawa. Could a union so unequal be a happy and enduring one? The compact we are about to form is for *life*. Shall we take into it the germ of discord and disruption? The people desire change; but they have no desire to exchange the Imperial heel for the Canadian heel. They desire political manumission. I stand here, and, in the name of my ancestors, protest before Heaven against the surrender of constitutional rights purchased by the best blood of our race—a priceless legacy we have no right to barter away, even if we would. We owe it to our ancestors to preserve entire those rights which they have delivered to our care. We owe it to posterity not to suffer their dearest inheritance to be destroyed. But, if it were possible for us to be insensible of these sacred claims, there is yet an obligation binding upon ourselves, from which nothing can acquit us; a personal interest which we cannot surrender. To alienate even our own rights would be a crime as much more enormous than suicide, as a life of civil security and political freedom is superior to a condition of serfdom; and if life be the bounty of Heaven, we scornfully reject the noblest part of the gift if we consent to surrender that certain rule of living, and those constitutional rights, without which the condition of human nature is not only miserable but contemptible. I know but too well that the people of this Colony have, during these years past, been unjustly and unconstitutionally deprived of their rights; but the perpetration of a wrong in the past can constitute no argument for perpetrating that wrong in the future; and it would appear a most fitting moment, when a new constitution is about to be offered, to demand the full restoration of political rights of which we have been for some time so unjustly deprived. A word about the constitution which the Governor proposes to confer upon this Colony. Regarding it in the dim light shed upon it by the Executive, it is not unfair to assume that there will be one more popular Member taken into the Executive, and that the people will have a majority of two in the Legislature. Let us suppose that the Legislative Council has 20 Members, 11 elected by the people and 9 appointed by the Governor. Three are taken from the 11 into the mysterious chamber of the Executive, where they become—I will not say corrupted—manipulated; educated to see things somewhat differently from what they saw them before. In a House so constituted, is it unfair, is it uncharitable to conclude that, on all Government measures at least, the Government would command a majority? Take 3 from 11, and 8 remain. Take 8 from 20, and how many remain to the Government? Is it not 12? Where, then, is the people's majority under the proposed constitution? And yet I am constantly told that this is not the proper time to ask for Responsible Government—that if the people want it they will possess, under the new constitution, the ready means of obtaining it. Sir, I do not see the matter in that light. I see in the proposed constitution a condition of things which promises a five years', possibly a ten years', agitation for what the people are prepared for now, desire now, are entitled to now. All Governments are naturally conservative. All persons holding positions of honour, power, or emolument, are conservative. Think you those holding office by appointment will favour or promote a change which would make them responsible to the people—exchange their commission from the Crown for the more brittle tenure of "public opinion"? On the contrary, we should find those in power opposed to the people in their struggle for Responsible Government; and how long the struggle might last, it would be idle to predict. Besides, the people of Canada do not desire to see British Columbia occupying any such false position. They know too well the value of free institutions, and their adaptation to new countries, to think of withholding them from us. These institutions were not won without a long and bloody struggle, even in Canada; and the prosperity and content-