

It is unnecessary for me to say anything in favour of the principle of Confederation. It is admitted in the Resolution which I have just read. I take it, Sir, that the obstacle there referred to will be speedily removed; that the small band of disaffected spirits will soon disperse, and that the machinery of Government will shortly be put in motion; and though I do not take pleasure, like the Hon. Member on my left, in revolution, political hatred, agitation, and blood and thunder generally, I am not disposed to regret the occurrence of the difficulty in the Red River, for it will teach the Canadian Government, and the Imperial Government, and all Governments, that though you may buy and sell territories, you cannot transfer the human beings therein, like so many serfs and chattels, to a fresh allegiance with impunity; that the consent of the people must be first obtained; and that though the soil may be sold, the soul is free. This measure was, to a certain extent, forced upon the Government by the people of this Colony. It is said that the people clamour for a change in the Government. Why, Sir, we have had changes enough during that time I have been in the Colony, to ruin any country; changes generally for the worse. ["No, no," from Mr. DeCosmos.] But whether Confederation comes or not, there is one change more which I hope to see before this year expires, and that is a change in the Constitution of this Council. I desire to see all the Members, save the Executive Officers, elected by the people; and this change is promised by the Governor.

I hope, also, that the Colony will so prosper, and the population so increase, that before many years another change will come, that is to say Responsible Government. At present, I believe we are not fitted for it; it is practically impossible, and the Governor has had the courage to declare it. I would gladly believe that the cry for this panacea for all evil does not come from those who would fain jump into vacant places, and enjoy what they are pleased to term bloated idleness. Such pharisaic patriotism was so well exposed by my much-abused friend at the bottom of the table (Dr. Helmcken), that I will not further allude to it. But I say, Sir, that if they can find public servants who will perform their duties better and more perfectly, let them in God's name come on. I am content, for one, to give place to better men. Now is the opportunity offered. But, Sir, I am rejoiced that this measure has come down from the Executive; it will, when accomplished, give us rest I hope from this everlasting change. The farmer, the artizan, the capitalist, and the merchant will know what to expect, and will make their plans accordingly. Years ago, the farmer naturally expected that the Free Port system was settled and approved of. Agitation commenced, the farmer and the merchant could not carry on their pursuits without anxiety, and the Colony suffered. The Free Port was abolished—that grand political mistake,—Union with British Columbia was effected, and a heavy tariff imposed, and business calculations were confounded again. But this Colony and the people have such elastic force, that they are again beginning to settle themselves down to the new order of things. Business went on, it is true, but, nevertheless, it suffered; and for the last two years agitation has again been at work. The farmer is alarmed; he is prosperous at present, but he dreads (unnecessarily I think) what will be virtually to him the Free Port system again; and so alarm, and change, and unquietness are for ever distracting this small and struggling Colony, which, unless it had immense vital energy, and enormous latent strength, would long ago have succumbed. I see, however, in the prospect before us, a sign of better things—a more hopeful future—a state which when consummated will, I believe, secure a more settled life to the Colony.

I do not fear for the agricultural interest, for I believe the only protection which the farmer requires, is the protection of good roads, good laws, and an easy communication with the markets where he may best dispose of his produce. Self-interest, if no other reason, will induce the Canadian Government so to modify the Tariff as to endanger as little as possible the various interests, agricultural and otherwise, of the Colony. I firmly believe that Canada will deal justly with us; at any rate, it is our duty to deal frankly and in a friendly spirit with the Canadians, until we see signs of a contrary spirit animating them. I am ready to shake hands across the Rocky Mountains with our Canadian brethren; let us not open negotiations with clenched fists.

As regards the paucity of representation allowed to us in the Dominion Parliament, after what has been shown so clearly to us by the Hon. Member for Victoria District of the analogous right of representation enjoyed by the Pacific States of the American Union, I think we cannot rightly expect more.