

impossible to approach the subject without feeling its vital importance; and I think it would tax our united will and energy to their utmost limits, if we had the power to frame a tariff which would be suitable; therefore, I see, wisely, in all the Resolutions a wide generality. Upon this question of tariff we must especially avoid attempting to commit the Dominion Government to any fixed principle. The tariff cannot be part of the terms, but it is, undoubtedly, a matter of consideration to be urged on the Canadian Government. Though we have assented to the Organic Act, we have not shut ourselves out from going to the Dominion Parliament to ask for remedies which they can give to us, and to ask them to find a remedy which will make Confederation acceptable to this Colony. Therefore, I think, with the Honourable Chief Commissioner, that one general Resolution upon this subject, after dealing with the three separate Resolutions or abstract principles, may, with advantage, be passed by this House. I think also, with that honourable gentleman, Mr. Chairman, that Canadian statesmen who will have to deal with this matter, will do so with wisdom. They, in considering the terms when other Provinces have entered the Confederation, must have experienced some of these difficulties which now come to us for the first time. No doubt many honourable members of this House have given great consideration to this question, yet I think that Canadian experience will help us. Much has been said on free port—much for and against. My own tendencies, since first I had a seat on this floor, in another Assembly, have been in favour of free port. I voted for it then, but I feel that I am obliged to vote against it now. The Imperial Government will not sanction anything which is in effect a differential duty in the same tariff; but this is distinct from the question of a separate tariff for British Columbia. Other considerations will naturally strike Canada, and I think if free port was made a *sine qua non* she would refuse Confederation altogether, as she would not like to run the risk of entering into difficulties and disputes of a fiscal character with her great and powerful neighbour, which might possibly arise out of smuggling. Another difficulty in dealing with this matter that we have to encounter is, that we have information that a reconstruction of the Canadian tariff is at present going on, and there is some chance of a reciprocity treaty being arranged, therefore we cannot put forward any fixed principles. The main objections of the Dominion to a separate tariff, it strikes me, will be found to be: first, that they are afraid of infringing principle; and, second, the formation of a precedent for a special tariff, which might cause Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and other Provinces to ask for special tariffs to suit their particular circumstances, and to avoid the inconvenience of possible hostile tariffs. There are certainly many plausible reasons to be found in favour of a special tariff for British Columbia. Such as the difficulty of communication, the want of either road or railway, and the security against smuggling into Canada. But the probability is, that protection to commerce would be secured by the reconstruction of the Canadian tariff, and I regard the framing of a tariff now which would apply satisfactorily to our altered circumstances, under such a thorough change as Confederation would bring, as a matter of impossibility. Formerly, when there was a free port at Victoria, it was always in danger, and the Hon. Senior Member for Victoria City, then the Speaker of the Vancouver Island House of Assembly, was always afraid of every little impost on stock or produce lest it should infringe upon the principle of free trade, and at last it was so loaded with dues and charges that before the Union the principle of free port was destroyed. But I see no reason why, when we are going into a partnership, we should not arrange the best terms we can; and I think that the differences could be altered in favour of this Colony, and in favour of Confederation generally. We have no power ourselves; that is the reason this question is not brought up in the terms. We must see what effect Union will have on this Colony first; we must see how the thing works before we decide finally. At the same time, we must take care that we protect such important interests as agriculture and commerce from haste or injurious delay. I will, therefore, as soon as the terms are settled, propose a resolution which will meet this difficulty and give time to see what change, if any, the country may require. In sending our resolutions to the Canadian Government, we must not suppose that we have exhausted the subject. Many points must arise when the Canadian Commissioners come here, or ours go there—if the matter take that turn; but we should be careful not to overload the terms, lest we should endanger the cause of Confederation altogether. We must have some faith in the Dominion Government—in Canada and Canadian statesmen. We must not forget that their own interests would be ours. I say nothing with regard to the latter part of the resolution of the Hon. Member for Victoria