

by selfish motives. If the people get Responsible Government I am satisfied. His Excellency admits that he would not like to extend the liberal form of Government to this Colony. My opinion is that there is no community unfit to govern themselves. Government is not a complicated machine. There is very little difference between carrying on a Government and carrying on a business. One-half of the depression in this Colony is, in my opinion, attributable to the despotic form of government. Just fancy the head of a mercantile house allowing his clerks to carry on the whole business of the firm as they pleased. [Hear, hear, from Mr. DeCosmos.] Without Responsible Government you will lose Confederation. It is not necessary to say any more. Let us have something like the Government of Ontario. Those whom I have the honour to represent sent me here to advocate Responsible Government. I will read from a petition now in my hands.

Hon. ATTORNEY-GENERAL—This is out of order. I rise to call the Hon. Member to order. This is not the time to present a petition.

Hon. MR. DECOSMOS—The Hon. Member has a right to read from it.

CHAIRMAN—The Hon. Member cannot read from a petition which has not been presented to and received by this House.

Hon. MR. ROBSON—Mr. Chairman, I request that you will be careful in ruling on this matter. Hon. Members have the right to read from documents to show the views of their constituents. It is alluded to as the best means of acquainting the House with the views of the constituency which the Hon. Member represents.

Hon. ATTORNEY-GENERAL—On the other hand, I would say that the right of petitioners must be respected; and if Hon. Members are allowed to read petitions, then petitions can be got in by a side wind.

Hon. MR. ROBSON—In my opinion the Hon. Member has a right to read from a document of this kind.

Hon. DR. HELMCKEN—Having looked at this document I see it is not a petition to this House, and may therefore be quoted.

The CHAIRMAN, having looked at the document, decided that it might be quoted.

Hon. MR. HUMPHREYS then read a portion of the prayer of the petition, which purported to be to Her Majesty the Queen.

Hon. MR. ROBSON—The Honourable and learned Attorney-General has appealed to those Honourable Members who are in favour of Responsible Government to postpone the question for the present. I should be glad to accede to the request if the Honourable and learned gentleman will meet the objections that present themselves to my mind as to that course. In my opinion, to vote for this section now will preclude the possibility of our bringing on the subject of Responsible Government in the House this Session. We shall be met with the assertion that it has been already discussed and decided for this Session. I am quite sure the Honourable and learned Attorney-General does not wish to catch us in a trap.

Hon. ATTORNEY-GENERAL—Certainly not. As Honourable Members have insisted upon opening the question, I now propose to go on with the discussion.

Hon. MR. ROBSON—I am most anxious to meet the views of the Government in this matter, if possible; but, as we are asked to vote aye or no upon this clause, I say that in voting for it we shall be casting our votes in direct opposition to Responsible Government.

Hon. ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The discussion must go on now. You have begun; it is too late to withdraw. The lists are closed, and the gang of battle down.

Hon. MR. ROBSON—Mr. Chairman, I will address myself to the question before the House, which I feel to be the most important clause in these terms; a question, in fact, which underlies the peace, prosperity, and happiness of British Columbia; a question which, if carelessly or improperly treated now, may eventuate in the most serious consequences to the Colony; for I believe the people are as ready now as in earlier days to fight for freedom, and to shed their blood in defence of their political rights. It becomes us, then, to be candid with ourselves and with each other—very serious, firm, and dispassionate in discussing this clause, as it might result in most disastrous consequences. As I read the clause, it places it beyond the power of the colonists to obtain the form of Government which they, as I believe, really want; and if we pass it we shall obtain no more than that slightly more liberal form which is foreshadowed in His Excellency's Speech, under the cover of Representative Government. Profoundly impressed as I am with the gravity of the subject we are now called upon to consider,