

If we could believe that the Government of the Dominion were composed of men of so little wisdom as the opponents of Confederation seem to think, I would say, do not let us join them. But I believe, Sir, and the Imperial Government believes, and British Columbia believes, that the Government of the Dominion is composed of statesmen. And I say, Sir, that since these statesmen have grasped the great idea of Confederation, they have proved themselves fit to govern an empire. I am surprised to find any Honourable Member venturing to suggest that Canada either could not, or would not, fulfil her pledges. The Dominion Government is one and the same in this matter with the Imperial Government. The Imperial Government stands at the back of the Dominion Government, and will be equally concerned in the fulfilment of the stipulations in their integrity. It will be time to impugn the honour of Canada when she refuses to keep the terms. With regard to Nova Scotia, a departure was made from the terms of union. The Imperial Government, and the Canadian Government, considered that certain concessions ought to be made, and they were made, but only to add to the terms in favour of Nova Scotia. British Columbia places herself in a false position before Canada, and before the world, in saying that there is any doubt as to whether the Dominion would fulfil the terms.

With regard, again, to the tariff. I think that the only arguments against Confederation worthy of consideration, are against the present Canadian Tariff. The Customs Tariff is a federal matter, and I confess that the arguments against the applicability of the present scale to British Columbia are entitled to notice; but, Sir, as I said before, I think these arguments are to a great extent met by the fact that we shall have an amended tariff, or a reciprocity treaty. But if we could hit upon some scheme that, without infringing the Dominion prerogatives, would meet our requirements, it would be most desirable, and shall have my hearty support.

In conclusion, Sir, the Government measure shall meet with my hearty support, so far as it goes.

It affords me unpseakable gratification to find that Government has sent down a measure for Confederation which can hardly be cavilled at.

While feeling pleasure in giving a hearty general support to this measure, I shall reserve to myself the right to suggest that other items shall be placed in the list now before the House.

I believe there are terms of the greatest importance which ought to be added. But anything that can be added will not meet the wishes of the people of this Colony, unless the fundamental principle of self-government accompanies them. I believe that the Canadians are a great, a wise, and a conservative people; but I conceive we should be doing a great wrong to ourselves, to our children, and to those who are to come after us, if we left out Responsible Government.

Suppose, Sir, the case of three persons forming a partnership; if the third partner, coming in subsequently, should consent to leave the management of his private affairs to the firm, he would not only be giving up his own rights, but he would be throwing into the partnership a great element of discord. I say, then, that while Canada necessarily and properly asks us to surrender the larger questions, she does not ask us to relinquish our smaller and local rights, and if we give them up we shall be doing a wanton thing and a great wrong.

In promising my support, therefore, I make this reservation: That, if this Colony is to become a Province of Canada, the people of British Columbia shall have the right to manage their own local affairs, as fully as every other Province has. For, while I agree with the Honourable Junior Member for Victoria, that the change from Downing Street to Ottawa would be useless without a change in the system of Government, I say that it would be most injurious to go into Confederation upon terms which might inaugurate a fresh era of political agitation, which would probably continue for a series of years.

Hon. Mr. HELMCKEN—Sir, I rise for the purpose of explaining.

I deny that I uttered any such thing as that the choice would be put to the people by the Government between two issues of Confederation and any other union. But that if the Canadian Government refuses to agree to terms equivalent to these, but chooses to offer some mean terms for consideration, when it comes to the polls the people themselves will raise the issue between Confederation and the only other change which offers itself for consideration.

The debate was here adjourned until Thursday, at 1 o'clock.