

PRIVATE BILLS

The following private and local Bills were read a second and third time and passed:

Bill No. 45—An Act to incorporate the Isolated Risk Fire Insurance Company, as amended by the Standing Committee on Banking and Commerce—Mr. Harrison.

Bill No. 51—An Act to incorporate the Kingston and Pembroke Railway Company, as amended by the Standing Committee on Railways, Canals and Telegraph Lines.

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. JONES (Halifax) resumed the debate on the Bill to admit British Columbia into the Dominion. He moved that the following words be inserted after the word “purpose” in the amendment: “The proposed engagements respecting the said Pacific Railway would, in the opinion of this House, press too heavily on the resources of the Dominion.” He argued that the Government might well hesitate to enter into such engagements after the fears and doubts expressed by the hon. member for Sherbrooke and other fathers of the Confederation. But, the Government would do well to hesitate if they desired to consummate the Union. There were other colonies to be added to the Dominion. Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island had yet to be brought in and it was not likely that they could be induced to join the Confederation under less advantageous terms than were now offered to the Pacific Colony. Hon. members opposite argued that if the Dominion was not immediately extended to the Pacific, the Western colony would be absorbed into the American Union, but the hon. members were adopting the very measures which would promote that movement.

The strongest argument against annexation had always been that our taxes were light, that while the Americans had a debt amounting to \$60 per head, ours was not quite \$27 per head of our population. Let these engagements be entered into by the Dominion, which were now before the House, and the result would be to leave us with a heavier debt in proportion to our resources than at present weigh down the American Union.

The cause of our prosperity hitherto had been the contrast between the United States and the Dominion, but the Government proposed to reverse the present position of the two countries. While the Americans were paying off their debt and reducing their taxes, Canada was about to incur liabilities too great for her to bear. He referred to the immense charge which the construction of the Pacific Railway would bring on the country. He asked the House to take a business view of this engagement, and ask themselves should the Dominion undertake it. (*Hear, hear.*) This extravagant proposal was the natural sequence of the Finance Minister’s budget speech in which that hon. member had spoken of the advantages of a great national debt, and quoted from Macaulay in support of this view.

Hon. Sir FRANCIS HINCKS said he had not advocated the creation of a national debt, nor had he quoted from Macaulay in support of such a view. He had merely quoted the passage referred to, to show how the great resources of England had enabled her to surmount the difficulties of a great national debt.

Mr. JONES (Halifax): Then why refer to it at all. If the Hon. Finance Minister had no intention to foreshadow the creation of a great debt, why quote the passage? There was no doubt that the hon. gentleman had that end in view, and the House should unite in opposing such a suicidal policy.

Mr. BODWELL in seconding the amendment of the hon. member for Halifax, spoke at considerable length against incurring the heavy liabilities which the construction of a Pacific railway would cause. He denied that there was any danger that British Columbia would be annexed to the United States if it were not brought into the Confederation. Did hon. members opposite suppose that Great Britain would allow the republic to absorb any portion of Her Majesty’s possessions without a struggle? If the cause was so weak that the government was obliged to resort to such an argument in order to coerce their followers into voting for this measure, it would be better to drop it altogether. He quoted from the speech of the hon. member for Brome in the report of the Confederation debate to show how some of the advocates of this measure had once been most bitterly opposed to Confederation.

Hon. Mr. MORRIS said it was most surprising, in looking back on the past history of Canada, to see what great tasks had been accomplished. The government had been taunted time after time with not being sincere in the great work of building up a British power on the Continent, but they could turn to their record, and challenge their opponents on the other side of the House, by what they had really done. Was it nothing that the Dominion already stretched from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains! And now the question was whether they should or whether they should not make what had once been considered a dream a living reality, by doing their utmost to weld the provinces from one ocean to the other into one solid Dominion. He was surprised at the course taken by some hon. gentlemen in the present debate, and especially at that taken by the hon. member for Sherbrooke, who had formerly taken the deepest interest in the question, and had spoken most earnestly in favour of the union now proposed; and he was more than surprised at the course of the hon. member for Lambton, who, though a later convert to the benefits of Confederation, had, with his party, stated that he should set himself to assist to establish and consummate the work.

But now, after speaking so often of his zeal for union, placed on record a motion which, while admitting the Pacific Railway to be an “urgent political necessity,” attempted to prevent the House from entering on the discussion of, and adopting the proposed terms of union. The member for Sherbrooke had dealt with the matter on a broader basis than had more recently been introduced into the debate, and, while admitting that he had no quarrel with the amount of subsidy to be granted to British Columbia, stated that he would