

March 20, 1873

Edward's Island, who had left here for the purpose of submitting it to their colleagues and afterwards, if they thought proper, to the people. Of course it would be open to Parliament afterwards to decide whether or not these terms should be accepted.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE said the hon. gentleman could see statements in the newspapers, and he could compare them with the actual facts, and if they were correct, or nearly correct, it would be quite evident they had been communicated and published in Prince Edward's Island by Government.

The moment it was made manifest that there was any official communication, the papers should be laid before the House, accompanied with any documents necessary to enable the House to understand the position taken by the Government. Of course it was quite true, as the member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) had said, the Government had no right to make any arrangements, but he did not object to the Government endeavouring to enter upon such negotiations as might result in the Union of the remaining provinces still outside the Dominion; and anything that might promote that object would receive the assistance on his side of the House; but he did think it was not treating Parliament with respect due to it, to have such documents as that reach them from such address during the session, and then, when the attention of the Government had been called to it to tell them that as soon as official communications were made with Prince Edward's Island, the Government would place the information before the House. He did not think it was the way to carry on business in relation to such matters.

The terms, of course, would have to receive the consent of the House, and in order that that might be done, the papers should be laid before them on the earliest possible occasion, so that they might judge as to the propriety or impropriety of the course of action proposed.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD said he differed from the hon. gentleman. In his view they ought to act upon the newspaper. The statements appeared in the newspapers where members could see them.

Mr. MILLS: These statements may be incorrect.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD differed from the hon. gentleman's idea that they should act upon newspaper items. The statement might not be correct, and, if incorrect, it would be very improper of the Government to lay the papers before the House until they had received official communication from Prince Edward Island. No unauthenticated documents should be acted upon. The Government of the Island desired that they should have an opportunity of submitting their provisional case in their own way to their own people, before it was brought up in the Dominion Parliament. The House would have every opportunity of considering the resolutions, should there be a necessity to concur in or reject them.

Mr. MILLS said the Government had no right by law to take the initiative in this matter. They did not stand in the same position with regard to the question of the union of the outlying Provinces as they did with regard to a matter of administrative policy.

There was nothing in the Act to justify the Government in taking the initiative any more than any other member of the House, and there was this very strong objection to the course pursued by the Government, and it was the objection made against their course with regard to British Columbia, namely: that while the people and Legislature of Prince Edward's Island were free to discuss the matter and make amendments to the terms, the members of this House would be obliged by the policy of the Government to either accept or reject the terms as a whole. As this House was one of the primary parties to any negotiations relating to Union, it was only proper that they should decide upon the terms before proposing to Prince Edward's Island.

There were only two parties in the matter, namely, the Legislature of Prince Edward Island and the Parliament of the Dominion. There was no third party. The Executive have not any authority in the Confederation Act for bringing about the union of outlying Provinces. Any proposition from the Government could only be from them as the agents and servants of Parliament, and should have received the sanction of Parliament before the Government took any action in the matter at all.

He cited the 116th section of the Confederation Act in support of this view. He held that under this section the Government should have consulted Parliament, and obtained its approval to the proposal they wished, as agents of Parliament, to submit to the Legislature of Prince Edward's Island.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD said that the hon. gentleman must not have understood the British constitution properly, else he would have seen that the responsibility of initiating negotiations rested upon the Government of the day.

The matter then dropped.

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COLLECTING DEBTS FROM VESSELS

On motion of **Mr. KIRKPATRICK** the House received the report of the Committee of the Whole on the resolution declaring it expedient to make further provision for the collection of demands against vessels navigating certain lakes and inland waters of Canada. He then introduced a Bill founded on the resolution.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON called attention to the fact that the Bill was old. The printed copy of the last Session was merely waste paper, and, therefore, entirely irregular.

After some conversation, the Bill was read a first time.

The House then adjourned at 5.30 p.m.