

an answer—whether it is the intention of the Government, before pressing this resolution to a vote, to place the House in possession of the information for which I am now seeking?

HON. ATTY. GEN. MACDONALD—It certainly is not, and for reasons of the best kind.

HON. MR. HOLTON—The honorable gentleman says it certainly is not. And yet he asks us to give a vote, in view of information which he withholds, not merely on the question of the defences, but of Confederation as well. If the honorable gentleman had used the arguments for withholding information which he has put forth, if the proposition were simply a money vote to place the country in a state of defence, there might be some reason in it, but he is using them to induce us to vote for a political scheme embracing all sorts of things other than the question of defence. The position the hon. gentleman now assumes is unconstitutional; but being unconstitutional, it is in perfect keeping with the whole course of this Administration since its formation in June last, when it initiated its existence by pledging the Crown, in a written document, not to exercise the prerogative of dissolution until another session of this Parliament should have been held. (Hear, hear.) I say that their course in this instance is in keeping with every step they have taken since their formation. Well, sir, I have put one question to the Hon. Attorney General West, and I propose now, with the leave of my hon. friend the member for North Wellington, who is entitled to the floor, to put another question. He may answer it or not, as he thinks proper; but the country will draw its own inference from his reply. Yesterday, he stated that in consequence of the result of the New Brunswick elections, it had become tolerably apparent that this scheme had received its first check. In other words, he admitted plainly that the result of the New Brunswick elections was adverse to the scheme. I may add, that he knows very well a majority of the present Parliament of Nova Scotia is adverse to it.

HON. MR. BROWN—No! no!

HON. MR. HOLTON—I say, yes; and in the Island of Prince Edward, there is no probability whatever of the scheme being accepted. Well, notwithstanding this, he says that he shall press this measure to a vote. A question was put yesterday, which

was answered; but there is some misapprehension as to the purport of the answer, and I think it will be admitted to be a question in regard to which there should not be any misapprehension whatever.

HON. J. S. MACDONALD—You could not understand it.

HON. MR. HOLTON—Well, I admit the obtuseness of my understanding. The question I desire to ask the leader of the Government is this—Is it the intention of the Government to press for Imperial legislation, under the Address which they are now inviting the House to adopt, affecting the Lower Provinces, or any of them, without the concurrence of those provinces? That is the question I desire to ask the hon. gentleman.

HON. ATTY. GEN. MACDONALD—It is not the intention of the Canadian Government to press the Imperial Government to pass any act whatever.

HON. MR. HOLTON—Then clearly the hon. gentleman was misunderstood yesterday. He then stated that it was of the highest possible importance this measure should pass without delay, in order that the Ministry might go home and consult with the Imperial Government in respect to the bill to be introduced to give effect to this Address.

HON. MR. BROWN—And that is correct.

MR. RANKIN—The Government do not intend to “press” for Imperial legislation.

HON. MR. HOLTON—I do not want to quibble about mere words. What I want to know is—whether, in pursuance of this Address, hon. gentlemen intend to ask, or have any reason to expect that the Imperial Government—(Hon. Mr. BROWN—“Oh! oh!”)—or have any reason to expect that the Imperial Government will legislate without the concurrence of the Lower Provinces? Whether, in point of fact, if the concurrence of the Lower Provinces be withheld from the scheme of the Conference, he has reason to believe that legislation can be had thereon? I desire to know, first, whether he intends to ask for such legislation; and, second, whether he thinks it can be had?

HON. ATTY. GEN. MACDONALD—I think the House, and even the hon. gentleman himself, must see the unreasonableness of the question he asks, which is, whether I have any expectation that the British Government will enact some compulsory law against the will of the Lower Pro-