

March 30, 1871

Hon. Mr. DORION said the question had two aspects, the political and the financial; the latter, however, was much the most important and had listened to the Government statements on that head in hope of being able to vote for the resolutions, but the minister of Finance had been able to give no favourable statement. He took great care not to give any details, and beyond the assertion that a cost of \$100,000,000 would be practicable, they had heard nothing. The American lines had been cited as examples, but it had not been stated that in addition to the land grants an enormous amount of money had also been granted. The Minister of Finance ought to be able to state definitely the amount involved so that the House might not have to make a blind vote, and he regretted the humiliating proposal of the Minister of Inland Revenue, that after the pledge had been given it might afterwards be retracted. He spoke of the heavy obligations the Dominion already sustained, and maintained that the Union Act provided that the canal system ought to have been completed before any other responsibilities were incurred.

Hon. Mr. TILLEY read the resolution at Quebec to show that the North West question was to be an express object of Confederation.

Hon. Mr. DORION said that matter had already been attained. He had never had, and had not now, any faith in Confederation, but he had felt in duty bound not to oppose it, but if he were most anxious for the downfall of Confederation, he could desire for nothing more than the present scheme to attain that object. Reverting to the canal improvement, he considered it unjust that the credit of the country should be pledged to this immense extent before that canal improvement was completed. He quoted from a report of Mr. Fleming, characterising the Pacific Railway as a commercial absurdity and that the maintenance of such a line would cost eight millions annually, and in fact that it was altogether impracticable, and stating that a macadamized road to the Rocky Mountains would require seventeen years for construction, and yet hon. gentlemen opposite presumed to say that this gigantic work could be commenced and completed within ten years. What greater absurdity could be uttered in any intelligent Assembly? If Confederation must be had in some direction better have it with the 150,000 of Newfoundland and the 100,000 of Prince Edward's Island than with the 10,000 of British Columbia, while the inhabitants in one case were settled, and in the other mere roving adventurers. He did not admit the necessity of a Canadian Pacific line, but thought the American lines should be used, and expend the money rather in opening up the North West by roads. He thought the four millions of people inhabiting the basin of the St. Lawrence were entitled to greater consideration than the small population of British Columbia, and if this large expenditure were to be incurred rather let it be used in enlarging the canals and so securing the great trade of the West.

The members were called in at one o'clock and the amendment

of Mr. Jones, of Halifax, was put with the following result: Yeas, 63; Nays, 98.

Mr. ROSS (Dundas) had ever been desirous of uniting the Provinces into one compact body, but the scheme was not perfected, and he thought the amendment he was about to move would open the way for a better settlement than that proposed in the resolutions before the House. He felt the country did not properly understand the question and thought every one should be able to communicate with his constituents. He proposed in amendment that, in the opinion of this House the further consideration of the question be postponed for the present session of Parliament in order that greater and more careful consideration may be given to a question of such magnitude and importance to the people of this Dominion.

The vote on this amendment was as follows: Yeas, 75; Nays, 85.

Mr. MACKENZIE'S amendment was put with the following result: Yeas, 67; Nays, 94.

On the main motion being put,

Hon. Mr. DORION moved in amendment that the speaker do not now leave the chair, but that it be resolved that, in view of the engagements already entered into since the Confederation and the large expenditure urgently required for canal and railway purposes within the Dominion, this House would not be justified in imposing on the people of this Dominion the enormous burden required to build within ten years a railway to the Pacific as proposed by the resolution submitted to this House. The amendment was lost on the following division: Yeas, 70; Nays, 91.

The main motion was again put.

Mr. MACKENZIE gave notice that he would move other amendments in Committee.

Hon. Mr. ANGLIN said the Government had not had a clear majority of the total number of the House.

Hon. Sir GEORGE-É. CARTIER said that had all been present, the Government majority would have been greater.

The main motion was carried and the House went into Committee on the resolutions. **Mr. COLBY** in the Chair. The resolutions passed through Committee and the Committee rose.

The House adjourned at 2 o'clock a.m.