

These are serious matters for consideration, and this question ought not to be dealt with as a party measure. I offer these remarks in the hope that any legislation which may result from this debate, after it has received popular sanction, may be judicious and of advantage to the Colony.

The Hon. Mr. HING, Member for Nanaimo, said—Mr. resident, I rise to second the amendment of the Hon. Member for Victoria, and in doing so I abstain from voting with the merits of the question. It appears that the Governor wishes to have a popular vote upon the question of Confederation. I say then, let there be an extended suffrage given, so that the voice of the people may be heard in this House. I hope that the people will have the opportunity of expressing their opinion, Aye or No, whether they will have Confederation. The people should not be bound by what occurs in a Council constituted as this is.

I say, Sir, that the material question for decision, is not that of terms. The Government, if this amendment is carried, will have the opportunity of hearing the voice of the people. On behalf of my constituents I say they do not want Confederation, they believe that it is undesirable at present. The proper way to find out the opinion of the country, is for the Governor to give us the colony certain representation promised. Let the question come before the people in a fair way.

I do not desire to go into the general question of terms of Confederation upon this occasion. But I must say, Sir, that these resolutions are not based upon the minds of the people. I protest, Sir, against the people's name being mixed up with those resolutions. I reserve what I have to say on the question of terms, and support the amendment of the Hon. Member for Victoria, in order that the people may have an opportunity of passing their vote upon the question of Confederation.

The Hon. Mr. HUMPHREYS, Member for Lillooet, moved the adjournment of the debate. Withdrawn.

The Hon. Mr. ROBINSON, Member for New Westminster, rose and said—Sir, I had intended to reserve any remarks that I intended to offer until the terms submitted by the Government were under debate in Committee, but I have an objection to the adjournment of the debate at this early hour. I cannot, however, allow the Honourable the senior Member for Victoria City to pass unnoticed. I believe the question for us to consider is,—Shall we have Confederation, and upon what terms?

I believe this House is ready to say Aye to the first question, and to go into Committee of the Whole on the second.

I am surprised to find an Honourable Member of this House, who is a Cabinet Minister, expressing his regret that this measure has come down to this Council as a Government measure. I think that the freedom of his remarks contradicts the idea that it is a Government measure, in the sense that Government Members must vote on it.

I was also surprised to hear the Honourable Member, who is a Cabinet Minister, say that Confederation would not be the only issue at the polls; but that there was another place besides Ottawa to which we could go. I had hoped that all allusion to this matter would have been kept out of this debate, for I say, Sir, that this vague language can have but one meaning, particularly when it is added that the United States will ultimately absorb British Columbia, and Canada as well. The Honourable Member evidently means,—Shall we have Confederation, or accept, as an alternative, Annexation? As every thing that comes from the Honourable Member is entitled to great weight, and especially as he is a Member of the Government, I think we have a right to know whether that is really the issue or not. I had hoped that this debate would have been carried through without the necessity of making use of the word "Annexation," but as the subject has been dragged in for the purpose of alluding to it. I say, Sir, that if the Government really means to ask whether the people desire Confederation or another union, let us know it. ["No, no," from the Attorney General and Mr. Trench.] I am at a loss to understand the position of the Honourable Member for Victoria. I am anxious to have it explained. If he has not represented the Cabinet views correctly this House should be set right

Waiving these matters, and assuming that the Honourable Member will be able to explain the apparent paradox, I pass on to the objections raised. I find the Honourable Member distinctly setting himself in opposition to Confederation. I will not follow him for the purpose of rebutting so-called arguments against Confederation.

The Honourable gentleman tells us that Confederation is unnecessary, that this Colony is one of the richest spots on the face of the earth, with a climate inferior to no part of the world,—why should it not go on alone? And he tells us that this view of the question is taken by the majority of the people of the Colony. Why, Sir, the Colony has had all this opportunity for fifteen years; and what is the fact? Ten years ago the Colony had a very much larger population than now, and very much larger commerce. Are we, then, under these circumstances, to ask the people to wait and work out their own salvation? But, Sir, in addition, we are told in a State paper, that we are not to be allowed to hang on to the skirts of Great Britain, like a mendicant's child. I can hardly reconcile the position of nearly independence with the position of hanging on to unwilling Imperial skirts. Rather than that, I would ask for union with the Sandwich Islands, or with Hindostan. British Columbia has tried long enough to get on by herself. After fifteen years hard struggle, she finds herself worse off than she was at the beginning. Her progress has been like that of the crab—backward.

She might make progress, but, unfortunately, her form of Government has rendered progress impossible. I believe that the illiberal form of Government has had much to do with keeping away population,—with driving away population,—and with destroying the spirit of manly enterprise of those who are here. Apart from its being, the policy of the British Government to unite all the British American Colonies in one great Confederation, if we persist in remaining alone we shall be told by the Imperial Government that we are not fit for liberal institutions, and not prepared for self-government. We should get no consolation. Downing Street Officials would say that we are not fit for Responsible Government, and that we ought to confederate.

There is no difficulty in showing that Confederation will be beneficial to British Columbia; that is to say Confederation on proper terms. I do not say that Confederation would be entirely satisfactory on the terms proposed in the Government programme. The terms, although excellent, do not go far enough, but I can hardly understand any man taking the position that under those terms, even as they are, Confederation would not be beneficial. The public works proposed would make the population of the Colony double what it is now. No man can conceive from himself, looking at the question dispassionately, that the construction of the Railway alone would bring a very great increase to our labouring and productive population.

We are told that the tariff of the Dominion would crush our farming and industrial interests. Why, Sir, that tariff is a little more than a third lighter than ours, and would relieve us of that one-third of present taxation; and our Customs duties, it must be borne in mind, are taken by the Dominion Government. Although in its present form, the tariff would be ill-advised to some of our local interests which we desire to protect, it should be remembered that the Canadian tariff is now under revision, as regards the free admission of American productions; and under Confederation we shall in all probability have a treaty of reciprocity; or, if not, certainly a revised tariff which would meet American productions, which now find a free market in the Dominion, with a protective duty. The argument of the Honourable Member with regard to tariff and farming interests is set aside away by that fact. [Dr. Helmcken—"Is it a fact?"]

This subject is one of the greatest importance. All other questions are overshadowed by it. It is the most important one ever debated on the British Pacific. It has been justly said it is a step for life, for better or worse. The question must be approached in a fair spirit, and in dealing with it we ought to be thoroughly honest with ourselves; and in dealing with facts, I hope that allowance will be made for what has been said, for I believe that much of the present opposition arises out of ancient prejudices. Why do we find an Honourable gentleman who has grown grey in the service of his country, and for whom we have respect amounting to veneration, talking in a canting and every interest under Confederation in Ottawa? Does the union of Washington Territory and Oregon,