

maintained was made without reason. The hon. member who had introduced the resolution had dwelt at some length on the danger of our present position; that in ourselves we had no resources outside the trade of British Columbia, and no position of importance (hear, hear). Those engaged in trade here had been taunted that they had not properly developed the trade and commerce of the country. He would remind our gentlemen that the action of the House was the best proof of the wisdom of our merchants in not accepting the free port as a fixed and permanent fact. The free port required to be firmly established before our merchants would import large stocks of goods suitable for distant and foreign markets; they could not be expected to do so, if they thought they would be liable to a duty in six months or a year. So long as there was a possibility of a change in the public mind on the free port, much would not be done towards making this a great distributing centre. The House had two positions before it: one was that of absolute independence coupled with a free port, and a resolution to carry out the policy at all costs and every risk and in a dignified manner, trusting to the hope afforded by our geographical position that we would ultimately become a great distributing port. He took his stand on the free port, and he would continue to stand on that policy so long as the country would support him. This was the opinion of all the merchants in the community and of our neighbours in California. He did not fear the imposition of a differential duty of 7 or 10 per cent. by British Columbia. If necessary, our merchants here could establish branches at New Westminster, but here was the depot, the open free port, the *locus standi* of the capital. If the country should decide to give up the free port there was no alternative but unconditional union: he was not too proud to call it annexation (hear, hear). It was simply saying to British Columbia, we are not strong enough to stand alone, come and help us. But before we decided on this question in the House let us request his Excellency to appeal to the country: let us be sure that the country stands with us in a matter so vital to the well-being of the Colony. He did not propose to go into the arguments for protection to industry. The idea was exploded long ago. As to British Columbia being our greatest market, he had always held that she was far more indebted to us; nine-tenths of all the enterprise, capital, energy, expended in that Colony had come from here, and nine-tenths of all the results had come back here.

Mr. Duncan.—Yes, and gone through here. (Laughter.)

Mr. Burnaby, if this House should decide to adopt the resolutions he hoped they would appeal to his Excellency to dissolve the House, and go before their constituents to hear the views of the country. (General cries of hear, hear.)

Dr. Helmcken said it seemed to be expected that he should declare himself (applause), and he admitted that the public had a right to know who he was as much as he had to have an opinion of himself. He believed that the Colony was suffering under great depression at present, and he was convinced that it was caused by overtrading. Cariboo had turned out far less gold than had been expected, and miners had returned with less gold. There had been no returns for the money expended in mining. That he looked on as a temporary difficulty. But the great cause of the depression was the vast amount of accommodation afforded to traders by our merchants. The goods were either locked up in the mines or sold at a great loss. A great deal of capital had been locked up also in quartz and copper mines. This, however, he looked on as also a temporary suffering, and he fully expected we would recover from it in time. It was not alone here that the unemployed men who had been alluded to were to be found. In California it was just as bad, and from similar causes. One might almost stop here, and say that if the depression was only temporary it would soon be got over. But other topics had been entered on. It had been said that the depression had been caused by our neglecting to foster local industries. This he totally denied (hear, hear). For himself he was still as much in favour of free trade as ever. He did not consider free trade had anything whatever to do with the present depression (hear, hear). They were told that of the \$4,000,000 of imports about \$1,000,000 was left for local consumption. It seemed to him singular that our consumption was only \$1,000,000 with a population larger than that of British Columbia, which consumed nearly \$2,000,000. He could only assume from that that the production of Vancouver Island with free trade was greater than the production of British Columbia with protection. His own impression was that free trade was the best policy, both hitherto and still (hear, hear). The next subject was union of the two Colonies. His opinion was that union with British Columbia and free trade in Vancouver Island would conduce to the best interests of both Colonies (hear, hear), and also be a very large saving in expense. Unfortunately our neighbours did not see it in the same light. Free trade, as it hitherto existed, had kept the trade of British Columbia in the possession of Vancouver Island. He did not think we were likely to have any great extension of trade to any other of the surrounding countries, to India, or China, or Mexico. He did not believe in any such extension. There was no doubt union was the great thing to be aimed at, and that free trade in Vancouver Island was the best policy, but let us unite with British Columbia unconditionally (hear, hear), unconditionally (applause), with one single exception, that the laws of Vancouver Island should remain unchanged till altered by the United Legislature, and he felt sure that the arguments which would be brought forward in the United Legislature would prove that free trade in Vancouver Island was the best policy for both Colonies. In any case the great good would be attained,—the Colonies united (hear, hear). But if the Colonies were to be separate, the only thing to be done was for each man to strip "to the buff" if necessary, and fight to the death for the free port (hear, hear). As to protection for agriculture in this Colony, he was convinced it was not required. In British Columbia, where there was greater protection than anywhere else in the world, agriculture had not progressed.

Mr. De Cosmos. It has; a great deal.

Dr. Helmcken continued that this Colony had not the land for agriculture, but British Columbia had, and the two united would combine their respective agricultural and commercial advantages in one. He repeated his position, united with British Columbia and with free trade in Vancouver Island, or united, at any rate, and still keeping the commerce of British Columbia, which our natural position ensured to us; or if separate from British Columbia, then free trade in every sense. These were his views. But he would not go to the British Columbians like a mendicant, rather would he vote for eternal separation than go to beg a thing which was a mutual benefit. As to our foreign trade, he would sacrifice all the trade with surrounding nations to unite the two peoples and make one great country.

Dr. Tolmie would wish to add a few remarks. It was not always best to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest markets. Free trade was not always the policy of great countries. Great Britain had