The Colonist.

FRIDAY, MAY 2ND, 1890.

THE CONFERENCE

Between the Government and a Deputation from the Mainland

Held in the Executive Buildings, April 29rd, 1890—Full Report of the Proceedings, and the Premier's Reply.

Present: Hon. Mr. Robson (premier), Hon. Theodore Davie, Q. C., (attorney-general), Hon. E. G. Vernon (chief commissioner of lands and works), Hon. J. H. Turner) minister of finance), Hon. C. E. Pooley, Q. C., (president of the council).

Members of deputation: New Westminster city—Mayor Brown, president; D. S. Curtis, Dr. C. C. Brown, ex-Mayor Townsend, John Reid and L. Eckstein.

From City Council—Aldermen Sinclair and Johnston; from Board of Trade—Messrs. T. J. Trapp and W. W. Duncan; from Surrey council—Reeve Punch; from North Arm settlement—Mr. Rowlands; from public meeting of citizens of New Westminster—Messrs. Donald McGregor, secretary, and James Beers.

From Mainland Association, Vancouver—Messrs. W. Templeton, Capt. Tatlow, Thomas Dunn, R. H. Alexander, Mayor Oppenheimer and Ald. Horne representing Vancouver city.

Mr. Cunningham, M. P. P., having introduced the deputation, Mr. Brown, Mayor of Westminster, said: I am speaking now as President of the Mainland Association, and wish to explain that a meeting of the Mainland Association was held some time ago, at which we had full representation of the whole district, and the officers of the association were requested, as soon as the Constitution Amendment Act—the Redistribution Bill—came down, to call another meeting. That meeting was held in New Westminster on Friday of last week, and it was resolved then to send a deputation to interview the government in the matter. The first intention was that the delegates should come from all the portions of the district, as it were, independent delegations from the municipal councils, and so forth, but, as you are aware, I was requested to telegraph to the government asking them, if possible, to delay the second reading of the bill. When we received intelligence on the mainland that the second reading was carried, this idea was abandoned to a certain extent, and after some argument resolved to send delegates to accompany the delegation of the Mainland Association, but a great many of them did not, and contented themselves with holding meetings and passing resolutions endorsing the platform of the association, and leaving it to us to come down here, as it was clear the bill being practically so far advanced it would be useless for a larger delegation to come. When the delegation met yesterday here in Victoria, of course, coming from different parts of the district they had not seen each other before, they had a meeting and put together the following points which they wish to submit to the Government. I have been asked to do this, and in the first place with your leave, I will read them: (Reads memorial, and referring to one clause remarks, "I might pause for a moment to say that the last clause was inserted because the association sent a proposition bearing on that throughout the whole district, and when the delegates came back it was found to be the unanimous wish of the district that such a distribution should be made.")

Those are the leading points which I have been asked to put before you. We wish, of course, to economize your time as much as possible, and put the matter in that definite shape, and I do not know that there is very much I can add to it. As you are aware, the platform of the Mainland Association is that the province may be governed as a whole, and treated as a whole, and not anything like a cast-iron adherence to representation by population, because we recognize that would be unfair, but there should be some basis upon which the representation should be adjusted. At present, we find there does not appear to be any such basis.

Hon. Mr. Robson—May I ask, is it assumed, as I judge it is, from what you have just read, that I stated that the balance of power theory was to be maintained?

Mr. Brown—I think the wording of it is from a statement made by yourself in moving the second reading.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Of what?

Mr. Brown—We desired to ask the question from a statement made by you, I presume, when introducing the measure with reference to the abstract theory of the balance of power. The delegates are desirous to ask in the first place why distinctions should be made, and further, as to the policy or idea of the government that this balance of power shall be maintained irrespective of the principle of population, or wealth and resources of the sections? If it is to be the theory that there are two section in the province to be treated separately and distinctly—the theory that the Mainland and the Island shall be kept separate and distinct?

Hon. Mr. Robson—I am glad you ask that, because I noticed that in both the New Westminster papers I am made to say the very opposite of what I did say. I stated distinctly that I did not know of any such compact, either understood or written, and they just make me say the very opposite. Most of the papers there, I suppose, strangely enough, make me say the very contrary about the balance of power.

Mr. Brown—If I remember, you said there was an unwritten law.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I said there was neither an unwritten, nor written, nor understood law; so you are just mistaken. I suppose you proceed upon the assumption that I was reported correctly in your papers. I had occasion to rise yesterday and state that, and I think you will see it in THE COLONIST. There is no occasion to refer to it.

Mr. Brown—Of course I may proceed to say, Mr. Robson, that color was lent to the interpretation put upon it generally by the fact that it is made from the reports in the papers as if the position of the government, roughly speaking, were something like this: "We must give increased representation—two to Vancouver, another member to Kootenay—and therefore it is necessary to find places for three more members on the island."

Hon. Mr. Robson—Well, what do you expect us to do now? You do not expect us to deal with that string of resolutions, and answer them, do you?

Mr. Brown—To deal with these?

Hon. Mr. Robson—Yes.

Mr. Brown—No. Of course Mr. Cunningham undertook to introduce the deputation, and I supposed, perhaps, in introducing it would say that we had come here to protest, as is stated in this first resolution, against the basis of this measure, because, in our opinion, we think it is an unfair and unjust measure, (in the words of the resolution) and we have come here to protest against it and the manner in which this proposed distribution is to be carried out. Of course, we do not presume to dictate to the government as to how it should be done, or anything of that sort, but we say at present we are unable to ascertain that there is any basis of representation. We find constituencies, for instance, of 920, 1,350 and 1,740 voters to a member they will have under the new bill. Agricultural constituencies, where there are nearly 600 to a member, though they are better situated for the other purposes of representation. I do not care to name constituencies, but, for instance, suppose the contrast of Esquimalt and New Westminster. There is Esquimalt with a member for every 213, or 213 and one half to be accurate, and New Westminster with a member for 595 voters. Now, Esquimalt, I think, needs less representation than New Westminster. It is close to the capital, and has scarcely any interests other than those proposed improvements for local ports, and they will be fully secured, I think. New Westminster is larger and cannot be so fully represented.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Taking Esquimalt and New Westminster, you point out the great and glaring inequality in these two districts. How do you propose to equalize that? By reducing the representation of Esquimalt or increasing that of New Westminster? Taking them as illustrations of the whole thing, how would you equalize them? By taking away from one, or adding to the other?

Mr. Brown—If we attempt to answer that we are assuming the position of dictating to the government.

Hon. Mr. Robson—No; I want your views. You are asking the government to equalize the thing, and I ask you, how?

Mr. Brown—We say it can be done by a redistribution measure which will deal with every constituency in the province. It would take into consideration, in the first place, the voting power of the province; in the second place, the contributions of the districts, and in the third place, their size and their distance from the capital, and their isolation, as, Cariboo, being widely separated and having interests diverse from the other districts, and others that are, in a sense, entitled to larger representation. We do not come here to ask special favors for our own district, but rather that the whole province shall be treated as one, and that a redistribution measure be framed which would come nearer to equalizing the thing all over the province.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Is it your opinion that a sweeping, a complete redistribution measure could be properly carried out now with the information we have as to population? Do you think the province is in a position to enable the government to deal intelligently and properly in respect of such redistribution in the absence of a census or other data?

Mr. Brown—That is a matter of course that I could not presume to speak upon definitely, not knowing the information that is in the possession of the government.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Yes; you have all the information that the government possesses on that point.

Mr. Brown—I should say then, and necessarily it might be unwise to go in for what we call a very radical and sweeping measure, and we think that some of the most glaring inconsistencies could have been much more nearly adjusted than under this bill. For instance, you have a constituency which in the last fifteen years has nearly doubled itself, in fact, which has grown ten to one. Now, why should the constituency which has been growing very slowly and steadily have the same consideration—have the same representation, rather, as a constituency which has grown so largely and solidly? There is no boom—no inflation.

Hon. Mr. Robson—And which has suffered very seriously from not having more members in the House, has it not?

Mr. Brown—I do not know that it has; but representation in the local House I look upon as a piece of property belonging to the province.

Hon. Mr. Robson—It is the sentimental part of it that you are looking at?

Mr. Brown—It may be sentiment, but you know that there has been a great deal of trouble in the world over things that have not been more sentimental.

Hon. Mr. Robson—You would create greater troubles, I fancy, in trying to apply an abstract theory to a country situated as British Columbia is to-day. As an abstract theory the principle is undoubtedly right and just, but if you apply it to British Columbia at present, it would be neither sound nor just, but would perpetrate a very much greater injustice in British Columbia than existed at the present time.

Mr. Brown—Of course, there is this difficulty, Mr. Robson, in the matter, that at present whether it is to be maintained or not, and whether that theory be romantic or abstract, there is a sectional line formed by the Gulf of Georgia, and is maintained in the meantime. Take New Westminster. Till lately it has been represented by one member for about 80 or 90 voters, and it has on its register to-day, I believe, exactly 1,350 voters. No other member is given to that, but a member is given to the Gulf islands. We do not deny that they need one, but we do say they have not shewn the need of it like New Westminster. The growth there has been anticipated; in New Westminster it has been ignored.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Have you shown New Westminster to be at all a badly treated constituency? You can stand in the centre and talk to the whole population. I think one member very well represents New Westminster—that is to say—when you make a wise choice of a man, and no one can say it has suffered on account of its being represented by only one man. That is the whole thing; we should not crack our crowns against abstract theories. Let us work on practical lines. I ask in what way New Westminster has suffered on account of having only one representative? or where has the country district suffered on account of having only three representatives. Is not that the practical part of the thing? I do not think that the time has come when we should run our heads against that abstract theory or principle of representation according to population. I think, until the census is taken, we should make ourselves very great fools to do it. I repeat that I do not think the time has come, and that is one of the things which led this government to bring down a temporary or partial measure. We felt that as Vancouver had grown up into an important city, it was highly expedient that it should have distinct representation on the floor of the House. We felt that Kootenay district ought to be divided—you cannot make one district of it, it is so essentially and completely two parts. We felt it necessary that it should have two members, both on account of its size and geographical position, and on account of developments and changes, such as railroad construction taking place, but we felt that we must stop there as far as representation on the mainland is concerned, for the present, until the census was taken. But in the meantime I would like to have anyone tell me until that time arrives, what right have we to anticipate that New Westminster district or city is going to suffer? All experience and history during the past eight years goes to show that New Westminster will suffer no injustice whatever. The one grievance seems to be this theory of representation according to population. As I said before, we are not in a position to work on that theory just now, and therefore, we thought we were acting in the true interests of the country in postponing the taking of the census was taken, but in postponing it we felt it necessary to meet such exigencies as presented themselves

Mr. Brown—I would like to ask you if you are willing to allow whether Vancouver has suffered?

Hon. Mr. Robson—I do not think she has. But we had others to contend with on the balance of power theory, in which I do not believe, mind you, but which I had to meet on the very threshold, and which I could not overcome, and which at the present time cannot be thoroughly overcome. The view of some who hold on to that theory was this: They deny that there is any considerable preponderance of population on the mainland, and they say that the representation, as regards the sections of the province, is close, very close, on the lines of population at the present time. We are not in a position to successfully contradict that; it may be so or it may not.

Mr. Brown—Of course the statement that the two sections of the province are about equal is a general statement, and can only be met by a general statement. I am perfectly satisfied of the fact that a portion of the mainland to-day is very plainly double to that of the island on the best authority we can find. We know that the registered vote of the province to-day at least what will be in four days from to-day, they are coming in, and we know most of them are in by this time—gives the mainland a preponderance of about 2,100 over the island. We know that registration cannot work so close in Cariboo and Yale as in cities on the island; we know that 6,500 and odd voters in New Westminster district constituencies represent a contribution to the revenue of $174,000 and 7,400 of voters on the island—$124,000; showing that it is larger and leading to the conclusion that redistribution is not so close.

Hon. Mr. Robson—You are counting the land sales in that.

Mr. Brown—We are taking the figures from the public accounts.

Hon. Mr. Robson—The land sales cannot be counted as a gauge of the population and resources. They are things by themselves.

Mr. Brown—It is a certain indication of them. You seem to argue in this way. You say New Westminster city and district have not suffered. We are not prepared to say they have; we do not come here to find fault with the government on that ground, and equally, Vancouver island has not suffered. It is said that we are sectional in asking for more representation, but Vancouver island says "We must and shall have representation, although we cannot show as good a right. Why not say you are only not badly treated, but this sectional division does not exist.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I am speaking of the mainland, I suppose you are speaking of the mainland as a whole?

Mr. Brown—We speak of the province as a whole.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Would you be surprised to learn that the whole of the mainland representation beyond the Cascades, that is, supporting the government, and nearly all are, excepting one, I think, support this measure strongly as the only thing that can be done at the present time, and in postponing any further step until there is a different condition of things? It comes simply to this: The Lower Fraser is objecting to this; the islands are supporting it, and all the mainland beyond the Cascades supporting it does not suit the Lower Fraser; and I do not say it is just; I don't wonder it does not suit them, because the Lower Fraser has reason to complain; but with the representation of the country in that condition, as the house is constituted now, I should like to know why you expect impossibilities, whether you expect us to be in a position to cut and carve to satisfactorily distribute the country according to the wishes of one section of the country, an important section, it is true, but a small section. My position as leader of the Government would be very embarrassing and painful; I should find support coming from nowhere except the Lower Fraser. It was a choice between two evils, because, I admit, the present measure does not do full justice to your constituency in the sense of population, but it is doing it no injustice in the more vital and practical sense of getting even-handed justice from the Government. It is all very well for you and the Lower Fraser to talk about the mainland; but, unfortunately, the great bulk of the mainland is not in sympathy with you at all.

Mr. Brown—You mean the great bulk of the members of the mainland?

Hon. Mr. Robson—What are they but the constituencies themselves? We are bound to speak of the constituencies, and can only know their views by what their representatives say.

Mr. Brown—I am aware of that.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I have been blamed for not resigning; for not breaking up the government on this question. What would be the result if I had; I could have done it. This doctrine has been preached; that as premier it was my function to shape the policy of the government, and if my colleagues in the cabinet objected, I should to them to step down and out—that I did not require them any longer. Surely, any sensible man would know that that is utterly absurd. To make the premier an absolute autocrat and his colleagues nonentities. No man of spirit and independence would accept a position in such a cabinet. I might do this in a very extreme case; but it would have to be a very extreme case. Supposing I had taken that arbitrary course, how would I have filled up those positions? Can you name the men because they would have to be selected from the House, and what would be the result? I could not get the material, because they would all be against me east of the Cascades, and if I attempted to form a cabinet entirely represented from the lower mainland portion of the country, that cabinet was capable of carrying on the Government. But if I had, what would have happened? I would simply have gone to the country on the basis we are now, and in the regular course of things we could not possibly expect to be sustained by the country, the greater portion of which would be against us. And supposing that we were, and in the course of events another term passed without any change, it would work gross injustice to some portions of the country. I was placed in such a position that I had to choose between two evils, that which I am satisfied is the lesser, and I am also satisfied that the people of New Westminster and the Lower Fraser, when they come to consider the matter calmly, will think so too,—to bring in a measure of that kind until placed in a position to take such a systematic, intelligently which be this theory of representation according to population. As I said before, we are not in a position to work on that theory just now, and therefore, we thought we were acting in the true interests of the country in postponing the taking of the census was taken, but in postponing it we felt it necessary to meet such exigencies as presented themselves

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Mr. Brown—I think you will find that the people of New Westminster will hardly agree it was the best thing that could be done.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Then they should be prepared to tell us a better thing.

Mr. Brown—I do not think we are bound to put ourselves in the position of dictating what should be done.

Hon. Mr. Robson—You say they will not admit it was the best thing? Surely, they ought then to be in a position to tell us a better thing. I may tell you that I have studied that thing for weeks, and I have not been able to hit upon a better thing, nor have my colleagues.

Attorney-General—Suggest something; compare your views with ours, and then we can see what's best.

Mr. Brown—Am I to understand then that you take this position that you mentioned?—that nine of the members east of the Cascades supported you, for instance, they insisted on members for Vancouver and Kootenay but insisted on keeping up the sectional line?

Hon. Mr. Robson—They joined with members of the island and insisted that there should be no disturbance of the existing conditions; let us have a census now, and then see if representation should be more on the lines of population.

Mr. Brown—Then I think I may fairly say as to myself you recognize the fact that the Lower Fraser constituencies have two-thirds or one-half.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Never mind that; I might demur to that.

Mr. Brown—Of the voting power of the country, and the largest contribution to the revenue, and as having other claims, their various resources, and so forth, are only to have six in the House; that you recognize the injustice of that, but that the rest of the country insists upon keeping up that injustice, and the only thing to do is to submit—to that, until it pleases the rest of the country to change it?

Attorney-General—By no means. Those were not Mr. Robson's words.

Hon. Mr. Robson—You are simply indulging in special pleading when you put it in that way, if you will excuse me for saying so.

Mr. Brown—Well, you told us you did acknowledge we have good grounds for coming here to protest against this bill, or, rather, you asked us what could we do? You say, if we attack the measure we ought to be prepared to find some substitute. We come to present some substitute, and you meet us with the objection that no measure could be carried in the House. I ask if it is not possible to give the members for Kootenay district, and Vancouver district or not?

Hon. Mr. Robson—I will answer that at once. We find it impossible.

Mr. Brown—Very well; if it is impossible to do that, I do not think it can be denied, taking and considering the whole of the province, a juster measure would have made the thing nearer what it should be. The conclusion we come to is this: For the present, at all events, we are simply to submit to injustice forced upon us by the overwhelming majority against us in the house.

Hon. Mr. Robson—What do you mean by injustice? Let us look at the thing.

Attorney-General—Injustice means a wrong and an injury.

Mr. Brown—I am not particular as to the particular phrase.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I cannot see any inherent right of any community in this province to have representation according to population, because, as I said, if applied to this country it would do an enormous injustice to a large portion of it.

Mr. Brown—We acknowledge that.

Hon. Mr. Robson—It would put the whole control of the province in the hands of two or three communities. And then, what do you mean by injustice?

Mr. Brown—We mean this: That, taking the population, representation by voting power which is the leading guide, and giving full recognition to all those interests that in a redistribution of the province that count, should give us a much broader representation.

Hon. Mr. Robson—But you cannot claim that it shall be put on the basis of population or of wealth?

Mr. Brown—No; contributions to the revenue we put it on.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Well, that is very much the same.

Attorney-General—Mr. Brown answered that position himself just now, when he said that on account of cities having newspapers and having the means of addressing public meetings, and so it was by no means necessary they should have the same amount of representation as country districts, which are divided by long distances from the cities, and which had not such superior facilities. Hence, that is a successful answer to the suggestion of representation according to population.

Mr. Brown—Our argument from the very first has been that population should simply be taken as the very first basis, as the one basis and principal thing to be most considered.

Hon. Mr. Robson—You cannot take population as a basis in the present condition of the country, and you cannot take population as a basis before you know what and where population is. That is one of the primary reasons why any general redistribution is at present impracticable, because you cannot tell where the population is. We want some proper definite basis to work on before we can go into that. I think you will admit that is right?

Mr. Brown—We have admitted that we are not prepared to say that the government should have gone into, at this time, a thorough and radical measure, but we do say that the present measure seems to us to intensify the evil than otherwise. For instance, taking one matter, that of the balance of power. When we began the mainland was 13 to 12, then 13 to 16, we were not satisfied, as was natural, seeing it was a much larger country and a wider territory in population and development of resources and all that. One or two small constituencies have been created by the government, and we did not recognize it as a matter of public policy that it should be.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I did not quite say that.

Attorney-General—What Mr. Robson did say was that he said the very opposite to what he had been reported by the mainland newspapers as saying.

Mr. Brown—We were asked to ask that question, as we could not ascertain from the newspaper reports definitely, whether the government had taken a position in the first place, and if so, what the position was? Whether we were to understand the government as taking that position—that this balance of power is a thing to be kept up?

Hon. Mr. Robson—Well, speaking for myself, I do not think it is, and I stated distinctly, and was reported to have said in answer to a question put by Mr. Cunningham to me—he wanted me to give a guarantee—well, of course that was a thing that could not be done—he asked if he could conclude from my remarks on this measure—and he had placed on them the most plausible interpretation he could, and he was disposed to give me credit for the intention that after the census had been taken this measure would be supplemented by further redistribution. I replied that if the country keeps me in power my policy will be a further step after the census is taken. Regarding New Westminster, as I have said all along, I felt that this measure is not quite fair to New Westminster, and I expected to have been able to do better by that district, but I was disappointed. But, putting all that aside, I would like to hear anybody say that with its under-representation, far short as it is of being what it ought to be—if it has suffered on account of being under-represented. The general feeling, I may tell you, among the supporters of the government was that it has got away with the lion's share every time, and they have been jealous on account of the liberal appropriations to New Westminster; and I have taken care even when you have sent men to weaken my hands, to abuse and misrepresent me—I have taken care that both New Westminster city and district got their full share of justice at the hands of the government, and now you come down here as though you were wronged and trodden upon.

Mr. Brown—Not in that sense.

Hon. Mr. Robson—But money is not the only thing. In other questions that have come up, has it not been treated as liberally as if it had a score of members. It could not have been treated more liberally. I have had difficulty with the members; I have had that difficulty in the caucus, and there was almost a mutiny once. They say that their constituency did not justify it; that you send me, but you also send two men to weaken my hands. The country simply would not stand it; and now you come down as though New Westminster had suffered on account of this abstract theory, which is little more than sentiment. I will take very good care, if I am allowed, that New Westminster does not suffer any more in the future than she has in the past. As long as I am in the position to take care of her, Vancouver is part of the country district now. We propose adding two members to the four on the Lower Fraser, which will make six, and it is simply idle, if you will allow me to say so, for you to argue in the face of history and facts that New Westminster being badly treated, and as your member says "sat upon." It is only, in the present state of things, a sentiment of no practical utility at all, and it is far better for the Lower Fraser to wait until the census can be taken and the government is in a position to proceed intelligently, not not blindly—far better to wait and not smash up the government now. Of course, in speaking of New Westminster I speak of the Lower Fraser generally. So long as the government treats it fairly, whether in a matter of money or anything else, I think it ought to be content to let this temporary arrangement stand until the government is in a position to deal with it, and more intelligently represent the different interests throughout the province.

Mr. Brown—I may just repeat that we have not come here to express any intention at all to complain of the government's treatment of New Westmins er in the matter of appropriations, but only to protest against the passage of the redistribution bill which we consider to be unfair and unjust—in the words of the resolution. Since, however, you have raised the question of New Westminster getting away with the lion's share, we might say, if we wished to answer, that New Westminster brought in the lion's share.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I think if you will figure it out, you will find you are wrong.

Mr. Brown—And that we should not complain—I think I might say with perfect confidence that you would not be content to live under the Czar, or other autocrat, even though he be the most munificent of men, and you say that notwithstanding we are not entitled to have our full voice in the interests of the country, notwithstanding that we can be out-voted, still we are to be content as long as we get the leavos and fishes.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I do not say that. I say that in other matters that came up, whether of dollars and cents, or anything else, you have been met in the most fair and liberal way.

Mr. Brown—We do not complain of that.

Hon. Mr. Robson—That is it—representation according to population.

Mr. Brown—We do not wish to oppress any constituency.

Hon. Mr. Robson—What do you want? Representation according to population? You cannot get it at present.

Mr. Brown—But we say that the present measure cannot be defended on any basis.

Hon. Mr. Robson—That is the best measure under existing circumstances. You cannot carry it to Ottawa.

Mr. Brown—But you can refuse to carry it on.

Hon. Mr. Robson—What can we do?

Mr. Brown—You put yourself in a worse position than I put you. I think an appeal to the country would put you in a much better position, and thus do justice.

Hon. Mr. Robson—What is justice to you, if applied to the whole country would be injustice. I contend that it would be injustice, and you have practically admitted that yourself—to apply representation according to population at the present time.

Mr. Brown—We say, not completely. It seems to me that we are continually talking over the same ground, and if the gentlemen present are willing, I think we might thank the Government for receiving us, and withdraw.

Hon. Mr. Robson, in answer to questions, but that there was no intention on the part of the Government, in what they did, did not recognize it as a matter of public policy that it should be.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I did not quite say that.

At orney-General—What Mr. Robson did say was that he said the very opposite to what he had been reported by the mainland newspapers as saying.

Mr. Brown—We were asked to ask that question, as we could not ascertain from the newspaper reports definitely, whether the government had taken a position in the first place, and if so, what the position was? Whether we were to understand the government as taking that position—that this balance of power is a thing to be kept up?

Hon. Mr. Robson—Well, speaking for myself, I do not think it is, and I stated distinctly, and was reported to have said in answer to a question put by Mr. Cunningham to me—he wanted me to give a guarantee—well, of course that was a thing that could not be done—he asked if he could conclude from my remarks on this measure—and he had placed on them the most plausible interpretation he could, and he was disposed to give me credit for the intention that after the census had been taken this measure would be supplemented by further redistribution. I replied that if the country keeps me in power my policy will be a further step after the census is taken. Regarding New Westminster, as I have said all along, I felt that this measure is not quite fair to New Westminster, and I expected to have been able to do better by that district, but I was disappointed. But, putting all that aside, I would like to hear anybody say that with its under-representation, far short as it is of being what it ought to be—if it has suffered on account of being under-represented. The general feeling, I may tell you, among the supporters of the government was that it has got away with the lion's share every time, and they have been jealous on account of the liberal appropriations to New Westminster; and I have taken care even when you have sent men to weaken my hands, to abuse and misrepresent me—I have taken care that both New Westminster city and district got their full share of justice at the hands of the government, and now you come down here as though you were wronged and trodden upon.

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Mr. Brown—We say, not completely. It seems to me that we are continually talking over the same ground, and if the gentlemen present are willing, I think we might thank the Government for receiving us, and withdraw.

Hon. Mr. Robson, in answer to Mr. Kennedy, added that he thought if he were to step down and out to-day, that is, if he were to be taken away and removed, the policy of the Government would not be materially changed in respect of the views they held upon this subject; the Attorney-General remarking that the force of circumstances would compel it to remain the same.

Hon. Mr. Robson, continuing, said—You want two more members, which would make the number eight; yet having these, you might be worse off than you think you are now. You have got to look at this thing all round.

Attorney-General—New Westminster has been fairly dealt with notwithstanding the fact that during the last several years the majority of members have opposed the government—the last session Mr. Bole, Mr. Ladner and Mr. Orr—three out of four representatives of that district and city—opposing the government. This year the members have been equally divided. These facts are a conclusive answer to those who assert that the government punish those districts which send representatives to oppose them.

Hon. Mr. Robson—And the government did justice to the city and the district in spite of their opposition. Then, as to saying that Mr. Cunningham is not supporting the government, I do not think he is really opposed to the government.

Mr. Cunningham—Not as long as they do right.

Hon. Mr. Robson—That is another thing. I maintain that no cabinet, no government, no house could ever stand together if every man were to set up his own opinion of what was right and wrong as a supreme rule for everyone else. The late Hon. George Brown was one of the best statesmen the Dominion ever had, but he was a political impossibility. He was generally right, but he thought he was always right and would not concede his opinion to any man in the cabinet or in the house. What is right, after all? For different men have different opinions in that respect. Mr. Cunningham says he will support the government as long as they are right. If every member were to make his own opinion the standard, what kind of a house would there be?

Mr. Cunningham—I think you have missed the most vital and important point.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I shall be very glad to have you suggest it.

Mr. Cunningham—You seem to assume that the function of parliament is the collection and expenditure of revenue?

Hon. Mr. Robson—No, I did not assume that.

Mr. Cunningham—You said as long as they were satisfied with the appropriations they had no reason to complain.

Hon. Mr. Robson—Excuse me, I corrected Mr. Brown over and over again on that point. I said distinctly that it was not merely a matter of dollars and cents. I said whether it was a matter of money or anything else they always received the fullest consideration.

Mr. Cunningham—But if we are not represented how can we influence the government of the country?

Attorney-General—How has it been done so far, when the constituency has been divided against itself?

Hon. Mr. Robson—Have you ever been refused the right where money or anything else has been involved?

Mr. Cunningham—How can we be represented on measures of importance?

Hon. Mr. Robson—How can you, do you say?

Mr. Cunningham—We have done the voting and others have done the thinking.

Hon. Mr. Robson—I say that in all measures, whether the expenditure of money has been involved or not, New Westminster has always been treated justly.

The Attorney-General then read the report of his remarks in THE COLONIST of that morning, mentioning that they accurately stated his views on the subject.

In answering questions by members of the deputation, Hon. Mr. Robson also said that he had stated, and it had been correctly reported in THE COLONIST, that he did not recognize the theory of the balance of power, either written, unwritten or understood; and that he did not believe in it; and that he should certainly be guided by circumstances as to the course he should take in the future. He did not fancy anyone who knew him would suppose for a moment that he believed in the balance of power question, or in perpetuating it. The position was not taken that it must be maintained on the ground for all time, but that it should not be disturbed now with no good ground for doing so, the census not having been taken. Vancouver Island denied that there was a considerable preponderance of population on the mainland, and the government had no evidence to show that there was. At the time of entering into confederation 12 members were given to the Island and 13 to the Mainland, although the population on the island was materially larger than that of the Mainland, and it went on for many years that way.

Mr. Brown—The population of the Mainland it was acknowledged at the time was about equal to that of the Island.

Attorney-General—Do you say it was acknowledged that the Mainland had a larger number of inhabitants than the Island? I ask you by whom was it acknowledged?

Mr. Brown—It was generally acknowledged. Perhaps it might be more correct to say it was never admitted on the Mainland that they (the Mainland) had less. You say there is nothing to show any preponderance on the Mainland?

The Attorney-General—Neither is there, any further than this, that up to the 28th February the numbers of voters on the different lists did not differ except by about 200, which at that time was in favor of the mainland—a large number of applicants to vote, it is true, still further increased the difference, owing to the efforts on the Mainland to show a large voters' list. Up to 1885, if you consult the Voters' Lists, you will find the number of voters in favor of the Island as against the Mainland. Since that time there has been a gradual increase, until, at the present time, so far as the Voters' Lists are concerned, the Mainland is in excess of the Island. But at the same time, it is claimed very strongly on the part of Vancouver Island that, after the census has been taken, there will not be found such a very great difference in the population. Until this is shown one way or the other by figures and documentary record, how are we to proceed? We cannot right one without possibly doing the other injustice. There would be a stronger reason to complain on the part of Vancouver Island were we at once to assume, without proper evid