

sary that the question must be re opened, that it will be re-opened. I hope that every cause of discontent will be remedied and that the Government will do that justice to Nova Scotia which the people of that Province think she is fairly entitled to.

Motion agreed to.

COLONIAL CONFERENCE IN LONDON.

Mr. EDGAR moved for :

Copies of all communications received by the Canadian Government from the Imperial Government, or any of its officers, relative to the Colonial Conference which opened in London on 4th April, 1887, and of all correspondence connected therewith, and of the instructions furnished to the Canadian representatives at the Conference.

He said: I ask for these papers chiefly in order that we may be able to know what has been done or proposed in connection with the great scheme of Imperial Federation. That question has been discussed a good deal of late, chiefly by essayists, especially in British periodical literature, and to some extent by British and Colonial public men. It has, I think, at last come to be almost on the verge of practical as distinguished from theoretical politics when a Colonial Conference has been called to discuss subjects which, if not absolutely all belonging to the question of Imperial Federation in name, at least very directly bear upon the subject. I do not know how, for instance, it would be possible to discuss, on an occasion like that and in such a body, the great question of the military defences of the Empire without bringing up the question of a closer union of the different parts of that Empire. We have the presence in this House, too, of the High Commissioner of Canada, who will be able to give the latest and most accurate information as to the prospects, the scope and the aims of that great question. There is also in this House, although I am sorry I do not see him in his place to-night, the president of the Canadian branch of the Imperial Federation League, the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy), and I hope he will take occasion to give the House some of the strong arguments which must have convinced his mind at least of the urgency and importance of this scheme. This is a new Parliament, Sir, and I do hope it will not be quite so timid as other Parliaments have been in discussing questions regarding the relation of Canada to the Empire, or the relation of Canada to the whole world if necessary. The project of Imperial Confederation is of course to bring the different parts of the Empire closer together, because it is nearly always urged by its advocates as an alternative for separation. It is said that if we do not get some closer and more immediate union of the different parts of the Empire, there is reason to fear an inevitable and imminent separation of the Colonies from the Empire. Now, I do not propose to discuss that theory at all. I do not propose to say anything about the suggestion that we must either have closer union or separation, but I would like, for a moment, to consider what sort of closer union it is possible for us to have with the Empire. It must be, I take it, either a commercial union, or a political union, or a military defensive union. We could, I have no doubt, have a commercial union of the different parts of the Empire without either of the other two; but a political union, I think, could not be had without a military defensive one, any more than a military union could be had without a political one; because we could not undertake to unite in any Federal Legislature the Governments of the Colonies and the Mother Country without uniting the armies. Neither could we have a common military and naval force without uniting the Governments that would direct and control it. As to commercial union, if that project was ever a desirable one, those who favor it must understand very distinctly that it is altogether out of the question now; and, if they deplore that fact, they can

easily see that it was the financial policy which Canada adopted in 1879 that rendered a commercial union with the Empire impossible, and they will know without doubt who are to blame for that. The advocates of Imperial Confederation claim that the Canadian Confederation was the first, and a very important step, towards the realisation of the larger scheme; and they say and hope that confederation in Australasia and another in South Africa will still further prepare the way for it. As to the Australasian Confederation, I fancy that has altogether broken down, because neither New Zealand nor New South Wales will have anything to do with it; and I am afraid the South African Confederation idea has also resulted in failure, because it seems to be generally felt among the different proposed members of the federacy that it would have the effect of concentrating the whole power of South Africa in Cape Colony. There is one thing we may depend upon at any rate, and that is, that, whether federated or isolated, all the colonies will hesitate to give up one single iota of their self-governing powers, and I would like to know what scheme of federative legislature could be devised that would have any powers at all unless those powers were yielded up to it by the different states or members of the federacy. Then, when we come to the consideration of an Imperial federative executive power, it seems to me the difficulty is quite as great, if not greater, because I cannot imagine that any colony would be willing to yield up any of the prerogatives of the Crown which it has been permitted to control. Therefore, I think it may be confidently asserted that no colony would yield up its legislative or executive powers sufficiently to constitute a federal, legislative or executive political union. These were some of the reasons that occurred to me as certain to render a commercial or political union out of the question. Then there remains to be considered a military union, a defensive and offensive alliance, a sort of mutual obligation among the states of the federacy to assist each other in war, by land or by sea, whether in wars of conquest, of aggression, or of defence. For example, without a political union, Canada would have no voice in deciding on the merits of any quarrels which might arise in any remote portion of the Empire, and she would have to bear her share in the multitude of small wars which the Empire is always engaged in against the natives of Africa, or India, or in Chinese opium wars, or perhaps in great European implications. True, we are not now entirely free from the danger that arises from incurring wars; we are subject to the evils of war in case England should engage in a struggle with any of the great European powers whose naval armaments are to-day so enormous. Why should we increase our liability to that disaster? I admit there are a great many things much worse than war. I admit that national dishonor is worse than war; I admit that the loss of national liberty is far worse than war; but, at the same time, we should, in every way we can, seek to avoid rendering ourselves liable to war. Our favored position should surely be utilised, at least, to secure permanent and lasting peace to the people of Canada, and while avoiding wars in which the Empire at large might be mixed up, I am sure the people of England and the people of Canada, at any rate, know that if England were so unfortunate as to be hard pressed at any time in a great war, the Canadians would be her first and foremost allies. At the same time, Canada's position does not require her to be a military power, and her people, I am satisfied, will never tolerate any scheme which would draw us into the liability to maintain large military expenditure and activity. Now, where did this agitation for the federation of the Empire begin? It may be traced to England. Not, however, is it to be found in the daily press of Great Britain or among the masses of the people. There are some leading, prominent, patriotic statesmen, on both sides of Imperial politics, who take a deep interest in this