

I say Sir, that the current of events points to Confederation and ultimately to Nationality.

Confederation is evidently our ultimate destiny—Our own interests—Canadian aspirations—and Imperial policy, as enunciated in the Secretary of State's Despatch, all point the same way.

We shall, therefore, best consult the real interests of the Colony, the sooner bring on a new era of progress and prosperity in this favoured land, by not delaying to debate and consider over the advisability of the principle itself, but at once to go into Committee of the Whole, and there combine all our energies upon the best scheme to be submitted in the last resort to the decision of the people, for carrying out the principle of Confederation, under God's blessing, successfully into practical effect.

The motion was seconded by the Hon. the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, who was excused from speaking at this stage of the debate on the ground of indisposition, under which he was manifestly suffering.

The Hon. Mr. BELMUCKEN said, the subject of Confederation was introduced by His Excellency the Governor in his Speech, in the following terms—

"The community is already acquainted with the Despatch which I have recently received from Her Majesty's Secretary of State on this subject, and the careful consideration of it cannot longer be deferred with courtesy to Her Majesty's Government, to advantage to the Colony. I commend it to your earnest thought. For my own part I am convinced that certain terms, which I believe it would not be difficult to arrange, this Colony may derive substantial benefit from such a Union. But the only manner in which it can be ascertained whether Canada will agree to such arrangements as will suit us, is to propose such as we would be ready to accept. With the assistance of my Council, I have prepared a scheme which I shall cause to be laid before you. Resolutions framed upon that basis will enable me to communicate with the Government of Canada and ascertain whether they will be willing to accede to the proposition."

While the views of Her Majesty's Government have been clearly and fairly expressed upon this question, I am of course in no desire to urge the Union, except in accordance with its general acceptance by British subjects in the Colony. I do not, therefore, propose that any terms agreed upon by the Government of Canada should be finally accepted, until ratified by the general verdict of the community, so far as that can be ascertained through another Council, of which the Council Members shall have been re-elected."

Before proceeding to the consideration of the subject, I will reply in a very few words to the speech of the Hon. Attorney General. The Hon. gentleman laid great stress upon the consolidation of British interests on this Coast, but I say, Sir, that however much we are in favour of consolidating British interests, our own interests must come first, Imperial interests can well afford to wait. We are invited to settle this question now and for ever, but I say that we are not called upon to do so; the matter will come before the people after the proposed terms have been submitted to the Dominion Government, and it will very likely happen that, if these terms are rejected and others of a mean nature substituted by the Government of Canada for the consideration of the people of this Colony, other issues may come upon the polls, and amongst them, the question whether there is no other place to which this Colony can go but Canada; whatever may be the result of the present vote, it is impossible to deny the probability of the less being absorbed by the greater; and it cannot be regarded as improbable that ultimately, not only this Colony, but the whole of the Dominion of Canada will be absorbed by the United States. The Hon. Attorney General has not attempted to prove the advantages which will result from Confederation, he has contented himself with vague assertions of advantages.

The question is only brought down by the Governor in consequence of the Despatch of Lord Granville; and we have to do is to agree to a series of Resolutions. It is not pretended that it is the voice of the people, or the voice of this Council. It is well understood that it is a Government measure. And we all know what that means—it means that this series of Resolutions is to be passed—And we have it from the Governor that he desires to send these Resolutions to Canada; they will not go, they are not intended to go, as the opinion of the people, but when certain terms have been agreed upon between the Government of this Colony and the Dominion Parliament, they will come back to the people for ratification. It remains then for the people to organise, so as to be ready at the proper time to give their verdict, for the responsibilities will ultimately rest with the people, and it is for them to say whether they will have Confederation or not.

I do think, Sir, that the question ought to have been an open one.

Her Majesty's Government ought not to have inter-

fered, they are not justified in interfering in business which we could very well manage for ourselves.

I feel certain that His Excellency will act uprightly, fairly, honestly, and generously, by, and for, the Colony [hear, hear]; and, Sir, I fully believe that if these terms are declined now, in any future negotiations that may take place, if the people support the Governor, no terms will be accepted, or ever proposed, which would lead to this Colony being sacrificed to Canada, and that the people will have every opportunity afforded them to organise for the final vote when the time arrives for the settlement of this question "finally and forever," as the Honourable gentleman has put it.

I see no reason, Sir, why Her Majesty's Government should interfere with our affairs, there is no reason that the Members of this Council should be coerced. The desire of Her Majesty's Government is in reality a command to the Executive.

A new Election ought to have been called before this question was brought on; but there is one sufficient left us, it is that Her Majesty's Government have left the terms to the Colony.

It is for the people to use that power rightly, wisely, and well, to see that Confederation means the welfare and progress of the Colony.

Now, Sir, in the first place, it is necessary for the people to see that Confederation must be for the general good of the Colony.

I am opposed to this question being brought down now.

I believe it to be most inopportune. It is believed by most people that this Colony is on the verge of great changes. That the new gold discoveries will bring a large population to this Colony, and that the slight despondency which now exists will be swept away, and that this Colony will once more enter upon an era of prosperity not inferior to that which belonged to it a few years ago.

I say, Sir, that this is an inopportune period to bring this question up, because when that population which is expected arrives, our position to negotiate for terms will be much better, because with a larger population and greater prosperity, we may demand far better terms than now, and, Sir, it is my firm conviction that if prosperity comes shortly the people of this Colony will not desire to change certainty for uncertainty.

Another reason there is that we ought to wait until after 1871; in that year Canada has to take a census of the population, and when that is taken we shall know the amount of the debt per head. I have no doubt it is greater now than when Confederation was first inaugurated. It is increasing, and I believe that instead of 22 cents per head it will now be 25 cents.

I should like, then, to wait until after 1871, because we shall then have a better opportunity of knowing the financial condition of those with whom we would connect ourselves.

It is inopportune, also, for the reason that the present difficulties in the Red River Settlement are sufficient to cause us great anxiety. I will not take up the time of this House by inquiring whether the people of that Territory are right or wrong. I know not, and shall not discuss the question; but this I do know, that if they induce the Indians to join them it will cause a great delay in the settlement of that country; and we do not even yet know that the Red River Settlement will prove so inviting to emigration as is reported. Again, Sir, I may state that Confederation, so far as it has at present gone, is but a mere experiment. It is nothing more or less than an experiment. And I believe that considerable dissatisfaction has resulted from it. If we wait a little longer before seeking to enter within its pale ourselves, we shall know better about the faults of its machinery, and perhaps be able to learn what are its drawbacks, and how we can best avoid them. These, Sir, are good and sufficient reasons for delay. It is absurd to attempt to ally ourselves with a people 1,000 miles away, without any settlement of the intervening country, with no communication except through the United States, and with no telegraphic communication. Canada is for all practical purposes further removed from us to-day than England, we know less about her. When we asked for a copy of the Canadian Tariff we were told that there was no copy to be had. "Yes, yes," from Hon. Members. No official copy then.

This, then, shows forcibly the latinate nature of the relations subsisting between us. When we desire to refer to the Canadian Year book, a most useful work, which during the present discussion ought to