

April, 1868, a Resolution was passed, confirming the previous Resolution, in the following terms:—

"That this Council, while confirming the vote of last Session in favour of the general principle of the desirability of the Union of this Colony with the Dominion of Canada, to accomplish the consolidation of British interests and institutions in North America, are still without sufficient information and experience of the practical working of Confederation by the North American Provinces, to admit of their adopting the terms on which such an Union would be advantageous to the local interests of British Columbia."

What is that but a confirmation of the principle? Now let us look to the Journals of 1869. There I see that, on the 17th February, 1869, when owing to the position of other political issues then current in the Colony, it would have been easy, had it been so desired, to procure an adverse verdict on the principle of Confederation, the House, though invited to do so, refused to go any further than to request Her Majesty's Government (while the North-West Territory was still out of the Dominion) not to press the present consummation of Union. The word "present" was an express amendment of my Honourable colleague opposite (Mr. Trutch) and myself, so as to preserve the principle, and bide our time. The House, therefore, I take it, has thoroughly and uniformly committed itself to the principle of Confederation, and may very properly be invited now, setting aside all causes of difference, for the common good, calmly, frankly, and cordially to enter upon a discussion of the terms. But if any Honourable Members think the principle has not been decided, now is the time and now the hour to settle that point (as far as this Session and this present Council is concerned) once and forever. They are bound, in support of their views, to lay before the Council the reasons for the faith that is in them, and to explain why we should not consolidate ourselves with the Dominion.

And here, Mr. President, let me say a few words upon the position the Official Members of this Council have occupied throughout the whole of this matter.

Their action has been much misunderstood—I will not say misconstrued—both in England and at Ottawa.

Until the receipt of Earl Granville's Confederation Despatch of 14th August, 1869, they did not feel themselves at liberty to go further in the direction of Confederation than to affirm the general principle of its propriety, carefully abstaining from the expression of opinion on the merits of any particular mode, details, or time of carrying that principle into practical effect.

That, they considered, could most effectually be done by Her Majesty's Government, an Executive peculiarly qualified for the task, this Legislature, and the People of this Colony all acting in concert together, as it is now proposed to do.

I do not at present intend to enter into the details of what particular terms would or would not be most advantageous to this Country in any proposal for Confederation.

That will be a question for the House to settle when, if ever, we get into Committee on the subject; but, inasmuch, as the principle of Confederation means the advisability of consolidating British interests on the North American Continent, it is impossible to lose sight altogether, in a debate upon the principle, of the general advantages to be derived by British Columbia from a participation in that great scheme.

I readily confess that there are drawbacks to material union, such as distance, lack of communication, and, to some extent, want of identity of interest, which can only—but yet which can—be removed either wholly, or in a very great degree, by suitable conditions of Union.

It is for us to determine those conditions in this House, and after negotiation upon them with Canada, to submit them to the decision of the popular vote, the people being the parties principally affected by the change, who will have to pass in the last resort, once and for ever, upon the whole question.

The circumstances, political, geographical, and social, under which we are at present placed, compel us to political movement in one direction or another, and the question is now—in what direction shall we go?

We are sandwiched between United States Territory to the north and south—indeed on all sides but one, and that one opening towards Canada. Our only option is between remaining a petty, isolated community 15,000 miles from home, eking out a miserable existence on the crumbs of prosperity our powerful

and active republican neighbours choose to allow us, or, by taking our place among the county of nations, become the prosperous western outlet on the North Pacific of a young and vigorous people, the eastern boundary of whose possessions is washed by the Atlantic.

This is the only option left to faithful subjects of the British Crown.

Now look at our condition as a Colony, with a climate far finer than any other in the world, with magnificent harbours, rivers, seas, and waters for inland navigation, with unrivalled resources of almost every description you can name—coal, lumber, spars, fish, and furs—mines of gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, and almost every other mineral throughout the land; with a soil and climate admirably adapted to pastoral and agricultural pursuits—with almost every natural advantage which the lavish hand of nature can bestow upon a country—the undoubted fact remains:

We are not prosperous.

Population does not increase.

Trade and Commerce languish; coal mining does not advance; agriculture, though progressive, does not go forward as it might.

The settlement of the country, though increasing, yet falls short of just expectations.

No public works for opening the country are on hand, and a general lack of progress (that is, proportioned to the extraordinary resources of the Colony) is everywhere apparent.

And why is this?

It is not, as some allege, because of the particular form of Government we at present enjoy (if it were, Confederation in that would effect a change).

It is among other things a Public debt altogether disproportionate to our means.

Our close proximity to an active and powerful neighbour whose interests are foreign to our own, ("Fear, Honor," from Dr. Hlchackon). But the chief reason of all is that policy of isolation which has kept us aloof from the assistance and sympathy of a kindred race, and left us in the infant state of one of England's youngest Colonies, to support the burdens and responsibilities of a thickly peopled and long settled land.

Do Hon. Members ask what would Confederation do for us?

It would at once relieve us from the most if not all the present ills from which we suffer, if properly arranged.

For Confederation in some sense means terms. It would assume our Public Debt.

Greatly increase our Public Credit, and thereby aid in the utilization of our varied resources.

It would leave us a good balance in our Exchequer to carry on all local works and open out the country.

It would give us a Railroad across the Continent, and a quick and easy access to Ottawa, New York, and London.

It would cement and strengthen, instead of weaken, our connection with the Mother-land, and ensure the protection of her Fleet and Army.

It would attract population, ever tending in a continuous wave towards the West.

It would promote the settlement of our Public Lands, and the development of Agriculture.

Under it Trade and Commerce would take a fresh start. It would enlarge, not contract our political horizon, and it would infuse new hope and life blood into the whole system of the Colony, and not leave us a mere detached Municipality, as some suppose, any more than Scotland is separate from the rest of Great Britain, or the County of Kent from England.

I leave to others to dilate upon the advantages which Canada would derive from the connection, the possession of a Far West (Canada's great want) into which her rapidly increasing population may pour, instead of going to swell the bulk of the adjoining States.

Those gentlemen will be able to show that the ultimate importance—may possible existence—of the Dominion as a Nation may hereafter, in some measure, depend upon her Union with ourselves.

To them, also, I leave the task of dwelling on the healing of old internal feuds of race and language of which Confederation is the only cure.

If we watch the progress of events, they all point to the same end, to the growth of a new universal sentiment of nationality in British America.

It is clear that events all gravitate in that direction. [Mr. De Cosmos "In the direction of Confederation or Nationality?"]