

THE SENATE,

Ottawa, Friday, May 13th, 1887.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

THE DEFENCES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

MOTION.

HON. MR. MACDONALD moved,

That an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor-General, praying that His Excellency will cause to be laid before this House, copies of all correspondence between the Imperial and Dominion Governments relating to the defences of British Columbia during the years 1886 and 1887.

He said:—The subject to which my motion relates has been deemed worthy of some consideration by the Imperial and Dominion Governments, and by some prominent members of the English Parliament also, and although I bring it forward in a time of peace, yet its importance may be taken as sufficient justification for my doing so. We must not lose sight of the fact that we have two restless, vigilant neighbours across the Pacific with which the empire may at any time become embroiled. It will, I think, be readily conceded that a time of war is not the time to make ready and to prepare defences. These are matters which require accurate local knowledge, and military judgment, to which more attention can be given in time of peace than during the turmoil of war. No doubt the Dominion will have year by year to look more to its defences. It may fairly be accepted as a fact that in case of the empire being at war, our enemy would be a naval force, it therefore becomes a duty to place the most exposed portions of our coast—east and west—in as strong and defensive a position as possible. The coast of Nova Scotia in and around Halifax is, to some extent, fortified, but I doubt if the guns or the batteries in that locality are sufficiently powerful to resist effectively modern artillery. That

part of the Dominion has also another advantage in having an Imperial force stationed there. Although not very numerous, yet its presence is exceedingly reassuring, and beneficial, as forming a well-drilled, and efficient centre, round which the local forces, and militia could rally, and with which it could co-operate, if unfortunately, an occasion should arise. On the western coast we lack those advantages. When the ships of war sail for the south in the winter, British Columbia is left utterly defenceless. At the time of the last war between Russia and Turkey in 1877-78, England was very nearly drawn into the vortex, but happily peace was concluded under the Treaty of Berlin. The Dominion Government at that time acted with commendable promptitude. A military officer was dispatched to the west, who made suitable selections for temporary earthworks which were thrown up, and armed with guns lent by the naval authorities at Esquimalt. Those guns, however, are now obsolete, and useless against the modern artillery with which ships of war are armed. More recently the Imperial and Dominion Governments, being no doubt impressed with the necessity of steps being taken of a defensive character, sent last year to the Province a staff of Royal Engineers, to survey and report on the localities where fortifications ought to be constructed, and the best means of doing so. The Premier of the Dominion happened to be on his first visit to British Columbia at that time, and he, together with Admiral Sir Michael Seymour, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific, inspected the localities proposed to be fortified, and gave, I believe, their approval to the plans of Col. O'Brien, the engineer officer, who conducted the survey. Since then nothing has been done, nor have we heard what is intended to be done, although rumours have been afloat that guns were on the way from England, and that the early construction of the batteries would be proceeded with, but those rumours have not been verified, and our western shores are as defenceless to day as they were years ago. When the papers for which I have asked are brought down I hope it will be found that both the Imperial and Dominion Governments