

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: My recollection does not go further than I have just stated. I may remind my honourable friends that the four Western Provinces are receiving some material advantage through these agreements, and that the three provinces of the East are also securing benefits that did not necessarily flow from the letter of the pact of 1867; so there remain but the two provinces, Ontario and Quebec, that might claim to be entitled to consideration and whose approval might be asked. All I can say is that at least three or four representatives of Quebec and as many from Ontario were present at that conference and were agreeable to the policy embodied in this resolution, which is based upon the Bills passed by the Senate.

Right Hon. Sir GEORGE E. FOSTER: Honourable members, it strikes me that the question put by my honourable friend from Bruce (Hon. Mr. Donnelly) is a rather important one. No discussion ever took place in the other Chamber, or outside of it, so far as my knowledge goes, that did not assume that the articles of Confederation were agreed to only after much negotiation, and that they became in reality a compact between the partners in Confederation. The partners originally were four in number, but other provinces have since been added, and have become jointly interested with the original partners. I am not lawyer enough to know whether, technically, the four provinces that united in 1867 are of themselves sufficient to consent to a change being made, and I imagine that my honourable friend who leads the Government is not quite in a position to say—in fact, he has intimated that he is not—whether four are sufficient or all are required; or whether, if the consent of all is required, all the provinces have virtually consented to the matter in hand.

It is a grave undertaking to amend a constitution resulting from an antecedent set of circumstances such as those of Confederation. We may as well admit that this will not be the last attempt made to amend the Constitution. This is a step that may be followed by others. I would suggest that as the matter is so important, and as we must stand a little for our dignity as a Chamber and for the position of the provinces as members of the Confederacy, this resolution should be allowed to stand over until a later sitting, so that we may at least have time to read over the resolution and think about what it means, and, perhaps, to amplify our knowledge a little by an understanding of what took place in the other Chamber and resulted in the passing of this resolution. I would

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suggest also that my honourable friend should in the meantime take this question, which is not an unimportant one, to the law officers of the Government and secure from them a statement in regard to it. I think it would be safer and more dignified to dispose of such a very important subject in that way than to rush it through with a turn of the hand.

Hon. N. A. BELCOURT: Honourable members, the inquiry that has been made is an eminently proper one. The provinces that followed the four original provinces into Confederation came in, unquestionably, under the same terms and conditions that applied to the former. They would have the same rights and the same obligations. When the honourable gentleman (Hon. Mr. Donnelly) raised the question, I asked myself whether this would be the proper forum in which to inquire into the matter of the consent of the other provinces. If the consent of the other provinces is essential to the consideration and adoption of a measure by the Imperial Parliament, I ask, would not the submission of the measure be the occasion for that Parliament, if it were so disposed, to ask to be advised as to whether or not such consent had been given? It seems to me—I am thinking aloud—that we should pass these measures on the assumption that if anything further is required in order to justify their adoption by the Imperial Parliament, it will be for that Parliament to make a requisition. I do not know that we can refuse approval of the resolution because of the point raised by my honourable friend, although I readily confess that it is a very serious one.

Hon. W. A. GRIESBACH: Honourable members, I do not think that we should deliberately put the Imperial Parliament in the position of having to go behind an Address of both Houses of this Parliament to ascertain whether or not we have proceeded in accordance with our understanding of our own constitution. I agree that the question is important and that we should endeavour to satisfy ourselves as to the law on the subject. On the other hand, I would draw the attention of the House to the fact that there has been a discussion upon this matter for a great many years. This year it has been brought to a head. The four Legislative Assemblies have been called upon to approve the agreements entered into with the Governments of the Dominion, and both Houses of Parliament have also been asked to sanction the agreements. Much depends upon these Bills passing this year. The resources have to be transferred. A building is being