

THE DEBATES

OF THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA

IN THE

FIRST SESSION OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA,
APPOINTED TO MEET FOR THE DESPATCH OF BUSINESS **13** FEBRUARY,
1879, IN THE FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF

HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA.

SECOND VOLUME OF THE SESSION.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Tuesday, 8th April, 1879.

The Speaker took the Chair at Three o'clock.

PRAYERS.

SEPARATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA FROM THE DOMINION.

PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE A BILL.

MR. DECOSMOS: I move for leave to introduce a Bill, entitled an Act to provide for the peaceful separation of British Columbia, seconded by any gentleman opposite who thinks proper to second it.

MR. SPEAKER: Who seconds the motion?

MR. DECOSMOS: The hon. member for Sunbury?

MR. BURPEE (Sunbury): No.

The motion was not seconded.

MR. DECOSMOS said he was glad to find that certain hon. gentlemen who were condemning British Columbia from hour to hour on the floor of this House as an incubus, an excrescence; those who threw insolent epithets at the Province of British Columbia—

MR. MACKENZIE said there was nothing before the House.

MR. SPEAKER called the hon. gentleman to order.

MR. DECOSMOS said he thought he had as much right—

Several HON. MEMBERS: Order.

MR. DECOSMOS said he hoped the House, or the Speaker, would not ask him to take his seat, because, before the day was out, the occasion might arise when

he would insist on that indulgence which was granted to hon. gentlemen on both sides of the House.

MR. THOMPSON (Cariboo) moved the adjournment of the House.

MR. DECOSMOS said he had heard from time to time, in this House, the grossest insults that had ever been offered to any people, cast on the people of British Columbia. That Province had been called an excrescence, an incubus, had been charged with endeavouring to gain something from this Dominion without any equivalent. He moved this resolution, and he asked those hon. gentlemen, who said they wished to get rid of the Province, to second the motion. Not a single hon. member, from the Premier, down even to the member for Sunbury, or the member for Charlotte, dared to second that motion.

MR. HOLTON said the hon. gentleman could not introduce a Bill, and claim a seconder on a motion to adjourn. It was utterly irregular.

MR. DECOSMOS said he merely wished to draw the attention of the House to the unfortunate position in which the Opposition stood; also, to the unfortunate position in which the Government stood. The people of British Columbia had as little faith in one side as they had in the other.

Motion, with leave of the House, *withdrawn*.

BILLS INTRODUCED.

The following Bills were severally introduced and *read the first time* :—

Bill (No. 74) Further to amend the Supreme and Exchequer Court Act.—(Mr. McDonald, Pictou.)

Bill (No. 75) To amend an Act for the more speedy trial, in certain cases, of persons charged with felonies and misdemeanours, in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec.—(Mr. McDonald, Pictou.)

Bill (No. 76) Respecting the Andrew Mercer Ontario Reformatory for females.—(Mr. McDonald, Pictou.)

ENGINEERS' REPORTS ON PACIFIC RAILWAY TENDERS.

REMARKS.

MR. TUPPER said, before the Orders of the Day were called, he would, with **MR. DECOSMOS**.

the permission of the House, say a word in reference to the application made by the hon. the leader of the Opposition, for a report of the engineers on the tenders submitted to the House for the construction of the two sections of the Canadian Pacific Railway recently put under contract. The effect of making public those reports, which were, to a certain extent, confidential, would not be in the public interest; it would tend to prevent the Government receiving as full information as they otherwise would. It would render engineers more cautious in their statements, lest their reports might bring them into personal collision with men of prominent positions, such as contractors. He proposed to place these reports in the hands of the hon. the leader of the Opposition for his personal information, and he was sure the hon. gentleman would exercise a wise discretion in not making public reports of a character considered confidential by the parties who made them.

MR. HOLTON said he ventured to state, before his hon. friend replied, that it was not in his private or individual capacity he desired to be put in possession of these reports, but to be used on the floor of Parliament. He had the utmost confidence in his hon. friend, who was his chosen leader. There were matters passing between the front benches which might be considered confidential, but this was not one of those matters. It referred to an important administrative act of the Government, which must form a subject of discussion if it was to be communicated at all. Therefore, his hon. friend ought not to accept the reports on the terms offered. Every member had a right to this information if it was to be communicated at all, and it was for the Government to take the responsibility of withholding or supplying it.

MR. MACKENZIE said, when he asked for those papers, he ventured to draw a distinction between those parts which related to the standing, morally or otherwise, of the contractors, or anything of that kind, and those which bore upon the advisability of accepting one or other tender, apart from such considerations. He suggested, then, that the reports, so far as they were of an official