

change in the institutions of the country, should be attempted to be passed by any Government until the people were afforded the opportunity of giving a legitimate expression to their wishes respecting it at the polls.

"And whereas, with a single exception, no petitions have ever been presented to this House praying for the ratification of such or any other scheme for Confederation, and in the absence of a decided and distinct expression in favor thereof, by a large majority of the people of this Province, it would, especially at the present crisis, be unwise, and dangerous to the peace and general interests of the country, to force the same upon the acceptance of its people.

"Resolved therefore, that it is the opinion and sense of this House that the Government and Legislature of this Province should be no parties to the consummation of any scheme for the Confederation of the British North American Provinces and Colonies, until an opportunity shall have been first afforded to the several constituencies of the Province at large to express their views and opinions thereon in a constitutional manner at the polls."

SPEECH OF DR. HAMILTON.

Dr. HAMILTON said:—If ever there was a question of magnitude before the Legislature it is the one which is now under discussion. I would have wished that this question had been discussed more on its own merits, but unfortunately it has assumed a party aspect to a large extent, and a great deal of irrelevant matter has been introduced. It is a subject which has agitated the public mind for a length of time, though it has never assumed so serious an aspect as at present. There are two or three points in which this question may be viewed. I will say first that any question should be considered first in reference to its merits, and again in connection with the parties who are in favour or are opposed to it. There is *now* some ground upon which to base an argument or there is not. In all the discussions that I have heard since this question has been up there are few persons who have taken that stand upon it which it appears to me its merits demand. As one of the people of Nova Scotia, as one having an interest in its welfare, in every particular, I would like to see the question settled on its own merits for the benefit of this Province as well as of all British North America. It is one which not only affects us at the present time, but for our future weal and woe. Consequently a hasty decision or an improper action might be calculated to injure this Province irremediably. It is true the question has been before the public for some time. It has been discussed since the delegation returned from Canada, as well as in the Press, though not in that intelligent and deliberate manner necessary to enable the people to come to a fair and honest conclusion. We are here as a part and parcel of the British Empire—lying between the Atlantic and the Pacific—and we must be very materially affected by whatever position this question assumes in the future. In considering this question, we must not look at it in its pounds, shillings and pence view only, but in connection with our duties to the British Empire. Changes are continually going on in the world, in reference to political questions more especially. We find that the constitution which Nova Scotia had some thirty or forty years ago, cannot be that of the present day. Refinement, education, and the resources of the province,

are daily and gradually improving—we have to pass and amend laws continually, as the country progresses. I regret that this question should have assumed the party aspect it has. Like Education, it should be kept free from anything that may give it a party character, and should be determined in accordance with the best interests of the people. The future of these Provinces, as consolidated, has been fully portrayed by a great number of gentlemen who have preceded me and spoken on the subject, and therefore it will not be necessary for me to deal with that part of the question. It is true that Nova Scotia is a choice little Province, and has got along very well for the last fifty years, and I would be quite content to let things go on as they are, if I had a guarantee of their continuance. Whilst we have not this guarantee, it is necessary to prepare for any emergency that may arise. If the Provinces were consolidated into one empire—perhaps that term is too extensive—or a Confederation, we would have unity of action, design and sentiment. If that would be the result we would have union which is strength, population which is wealth, and knowledge which is power. I think a confederation of British North America might be so arranged and so adapted to our wants and circumstances that their combination would be brought about to benefit the whole. I will suppose that the United States had remained different and independent States, and had not united, what would have been the result? Would the 13 States be the 32 United States with all the power and influence that they now exercise under the one government managed by one general legislature—with identity of interest, purpose and design. If each had chosen its own president—its own representatives—arranged its own trade relations, customs, and revenues would not the state of things on this continent present a very different aspect at this present time. I want to know if Massachusetts could have become the great manufacturing state she now is, if the hostile tariffs and arrangements that exist between the States were in force. The question has been asked if we have territory enough to form a Confederation. As far as territory is concerned, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from 42 degrees to the North Pole, British North America is much larger than the present United States, and is under British control. I think that this territory is enough to form a small kingdom in connection with the British Empire. I don't think I can do better than to read an extract from a work, speaking of the territory that would form the proposed Confederation.

"1. Come from whose hand it may, the resolution before the committee opens for discussion the broadest field, the noblest subject ever presented to the consideration of this Legislature. A day, or even a week, may be well spent upon such a theme. If, sir, such topics were oftener presented here our ideas would expand beyond the charmed, it may be, but the contracted circle of party disputations; our debates would assume a higher tone; and the hopes and aspirations of our people, clustering around their firesides, would point to interests more enduring than