

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, *February 8, 1865.*

The Order of the Day for resuming the debate on the Resolution for a Union of the British North American Colonies, having been read,—

HON. GEORGE BROWN rose and said: Mr. SPEAKER, it is with no ordinary gratification I rise to address the House on this occasion. I cannot help feeling that the struggle of half a life-time for constitutional reform—the agitations in the country, and the fierce contests in this chamber—the strife and the discord and the abuse of many years,—are all compensated by the great scheme of reform which is now in your hands. (Cheers.) The Attorney General for Upper Canada, as well as the Attorney General for Lower Canada, in addressing the House last night, were anxious to have it understood that this scheme for uniting British America under one government, is something different from “representation by population,”—is something different from “joint authority,”—but is in fact the very scheme of the Government of which they were members in 1858. Now, sir, it is all very well that my honorable friends should receive credit for the large share they have contributed towards maturing the measure before the House; but I could not help reflecting while they spoke, that if this was their very scheme in 1858, they succeeded wonderfully in bottling it up from all the world except themselves—(hear, hear)—and I could not help regretting that we had to wait till 1864 until this mysterious plant of 1858 was forced to fruition. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) For myself, sir, I care not who gets the credit of this scheme,—I believe it contains the best features of all the suggestions that have been made in the last ten years for the settlement of our troubles; and the whole feeling in my mind now is one of joy and thankfulness that there were found men of position and influence in Canada who, at a moment of serious crisis, had nerve and patriotism enough to cast aside political partisanship, to banish personal considerations, and unite for the accomplishment of a measure so fraught with advantage to their common country. (Cheers.) It was a bold step in the then existing state of public feeling for many members of the House to vote for the Constitutional Committee moved for by me last session—it was a very bold step for many of the members of that committee to speak

and vote candidly upon it—it was a still bolder thing for many to place their names to the report that emanated from that committee,—but it was an infinitely bolder step for the gentlemen who now occupy these treasury benches, to brave the misconceptions and suspicions that would certainly attach to the act, and enter the same Government. And it is not to be denied that such a Coalition demanded no ordinary justification. But who does not feel that every one of us has to-day ample justification and reward for all we did in the document now under discussion? (Cheers.) But seven short months have passed away since the Coalition Government was formed, yet already are we submitting a scheme well-weighed and matured, for the erection of a future empire,—a scheme which has been received at home and abroad with almost universal approval.

HON. MR. HOLTON—(Ironically) hear! hear!!

HON. MR. BROWN—My hon. friend dissents from that, but is it possible truthfully to deny it? Has it not been approved and endorsed by the governments of five separate colonies?—Has it not received the all but unanimous approval of the press of Canada?—Has it not been heartily and unequivocally endorsed by the electors of Canada? (Cries of hear, hear, and no, no.) My honorable friend opposite cries “no, no,” but I say “yes, yes.” Since the Coalition was formed, and its policy of Federal union announced, there have been no fewer than twenty-five parliamentary elections—fourteen for members of the Upper House, and eleven for members of the Lower House. At the fourteen Upper House contests, but three candidates dared to show themselves before the people in opposition to the Government scheme; and of these, two were rejected, and one—only one—succeeded in finding a seat. (Hear, hear.) At the eleven contests for the Lower House, but one candidate on either side of politics ventured to oppose the scheme, and I hope that even he will yet cast his vote in favor of Confederation. (Hear, hear.) Of these twenty-five electoral contests, fourteen were in Upper Canada, but not at one of them did a candidate appear in opposition to our scheme. And let it be observed how large a portion of the country these twenty-five electoral districts embraced. It is true that the eleven Lower House elections only included that number of counties, but the fourteen Upper House elections embraced no fewer than forty counties. (Hear, hear.) Of the 130 constituencies, therefore, into which Canada is divided for representa-