

whom he has taken more than he all along declared was just; and surely that is not a position to regard with pride. Turning to the only point we are to be permitted, in the magnanimity of the gentlemen opposite, to discuss—the right of the people to be heard on the question—I would first refer to the taunt made by the Financial Secretary. He said we had brought a case here without a precedent to support us, although we had a whole year to obtain such precedents if they existed. I tell him that I have had an abundance of authorities for the position I have taken—authority which I have not sought in the musty pages of Blackstone, to which the hon gentleman last year referred to sustain his position. I have been reading a nobler page than Blackstone ever wrote—a page which bears the impress and imprint of God himself: I mean “the human face divine.” I have read the authority which sustains us every day in the year in the faces of my fellow countrymen. Our authority is the look of intelligence on their countenances; I see that in their faces which declares that they have the souls and the reasoning and reflecting powers to enable them to decide on a question affecting them and their posterity as this does.

These men till the soil, engage in commerce and fisheries; they have, by their labours and enterprise given us, under the blessing of Providence, all our prosperity, and I take them as my authority. Fifty thousand of these men are devoting their time and means to learn defence: ready to lay down their lives to protect their country, their homes and their altars. They have during the year paid into the Treasury through the customs, excise and other departments, nearly two millions of dollars of their hard earnings, and I say the men who thus in their persons and property are to be affected by this measure are my authority for saying that they should be allowed to decide the question. It is not only to the copies of this authority that are already abroad that I can refer, but every reprint preparing for circulation confirms that authority. Those men are training children; they have sons who will be either taught principles and instilled with feelings that will lead them to rally round the old flag of England, or will lead them beneath a foreign standard to attempt, perhaps, the humiliation of England. When I see that I feel that my authority for maintaining the rights of the people is strong and conclusive, and should be recognised as such by this Legislature. In order to meet the sophistry and destroy the cobwebs which some gentlemen learned in the law are disposed to weave about the question, it is not necessary to labor the argument. I care not how many precedents from Blackstone is brought—I care not if they bring old Blackstone himself from the grave—there is a principle of common sense that would trample them all under foot and proclaim that this right belongs to the people. The very term “responsible government” tells us that the people should decide the question. Responsible to whom? Pass the bill and your responsibility is at an end. Our system of Government implies that you have either had the sanction of the people or intend to return to them for ratification. This bill does not contemplate that you should do that, for the very Act destroys the constitution, and is contrary to the term—Responsible Government. The

gentlemen who have spoken on the other side affect to treat lightly the opinion of the people,—but who gave us all our positions? Who sent us here but the people? It is but a few years since they and all of us were portions of the people, and now forsooth, because they are placed in power beyond the control of their constituents they presume to ignore the rights of those who sent them here, and to destroy the hand that lifted them to positions of honor. I can scarcely restrain my feeling within reasonable bounds when I see the determination of gentlemen opposite to ignore the feelings and rights of the people on this question. We are told that the country has not been taken by surprise—that this is no new question, but I maintain that it is an entire surprise. It is true that for many years the subject of a union of British America has been from time to time discussed, but we all know that these discussions were considered more theoretical than practical, and not the least importance was attached to them as being likely to affect the country.

Reference has been made to the action of the Legislature in 1861, when Mr. Howe, whose name has been so frequently mentioned in this discussion, moved a resolution declaring that the subject of Union had been from time to time considered, and that as serious obstacles existed, which could only be removed by consultation of the leading men of all the Colonies, a delegation should be appointed with the view of setting the question at rest. That delegation met, and it resulted in no action being taken by this Legislature or by the people. The delegates no doubt found it impossible to reconcile the conflicting interests existing among the Province, and they made this report, setting it, as a public question, as was believed, at rest. It may be said that Canada was not anxious for Union at that period,—but in 1858 they had asked for it by a despatch signed by Messrs. Cartier and Galt, men who were prominent in the Quebec Conference. That despatch declared that the harmonious working of their constitution had been rendered almost an impossibility, and asking for a Federative Union of the Provinces of British North America on “grounds peculiar to Canada.”

In 1858, then, you had Canadian ministers expressing a desire for union, and declaring, through a public despatch that the administration of government had been almost an impossibility in Canada; and when Mr. Howe went in 1861 to set the question at rest, the desire existed on the part of Canada to overcome the difficulties of their system, and to unite with us. Why, then, this being the case, was not the Union accomplished? The language of the resolution is, “by mutual consultation,” implying that there should be mutual concessions; and perhaps the main reason why a basis of union was not then arranged was that the Canadians were unwilling to make such concessions as Mr. Howe, in a due regard for the interests of Nova Scotia, believed should be made before we went into any Union—And let me ask here what concessions they have made in the scheme under consideration? It is impossible for the delegates to lay their finger on a single feature in this scheme and say, there is something that has been conceded to us by Canada