

an independent position, and hence I consider that the resolution proposed by the hon. leader of the Government, is the only one we can safely adopt. We must not commit ourselves to the union as the other Colonies, by their Resolutions, appear to have done. We should first consider the expediency of a union; but before we can be in a position to do so, we must hear the arguments and reasons which may be offered in support of it, and therefore, it is our duty to appoint delegates; to refuse this much, would be uncoöperative to our sister Colonies. Besides, we cannot lose by obtaining information upon all colonial questions which may have a tendency to affect us as a government or a people. If the time should arrive when we might be necessitated to enter into a union, by refusing to confer on the subject now, we might be placed in a disadvantageous position hereafter. But while we appoint delegates, we must not tie up our hands, and commit ourselves to a union, without knowing what equivalent we are to receive. I admit that it might add to our importance to be a part of a larger Province which might be called Acadia or Cebotia, or any thing else, still this would not satisfy our people unless there was some material and great permanent advantage to be gained by the change. Though united with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, we could do little in giving battle to a government like the United States, if it should ever be the policy of that country to go to war with England or her North American Colonies; consequently, I can see no force in the argument drawn from probable occurrences in that country. We must look to ourselves, and our own interests, and act accordingly. The practical difficulty that would be experienced by us in sending Representatives across our ice-bound Strait in the winter season to attend the United Legislature in Halifax, or some other favored city on the other side of the water, seems to me at present almost sufficient to overbalance every argument in favor of the project, unless indeed, Charlottetown were made the capital of the United Provinces, which we could not expect it would be. The question is, then, should we give up our independent position—our separate Government—and become a part of a greater Province? My own opinion is decidedly in the negative, but the question can only be satisfactorily answered when we ascertain the terms of union, which it would be the duty of delegates, if appointed, to learn; therefore, I will support the resolution before the Committee authorizing such an appointment, reserving to ourselves, as a Legislature, our own action hereafter upon the results of that Delegation.

Adjourned for one hour

MONDAY AFTERNOON, April 18.

Committee on despatches resumed.

Hon. Mr. SPEAKER.—Mr. Chairman, since I have had a seat in this House, many questions of moment have been introduced and discussed, but although I was a member of the Legislature at the times when the principal Responsible Government, Free Trade, and an Executive Legislative Council were debated, yet the subject on which we are now engaged, is, in my opinion, of importance paramount to any which has ever engaged the attention of our local legislature. The question at issue is briefly, whether we are to have a Legislature of our own, or whether we shall be absorbed by union with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This is a subject which can be discussed without party bias, and it is the duty of every hon. member to give his individual opinion on a matter of such importance, irrespectively of the obligations which the interests of political combination in many cases impose. This question of a union of the Maritime Colonies is not a new one. In 1813, the father of Her Majesty, the late Duke of Kent, while Commander-in-Chief of the Province of Nova Scotia, corresponded on the subject with Judge Sewell in Canada. The Duke was of opinion that these Colonies, without a political union, would never occupy the influential position to which they were entitled by the elements of material prosperity which they possessed. It was urged this morning as an argument in favor of the union, that, in the event of a cessation of the present civil war in the States, we would be powerless against a northern army or against the united forces of the restored union. If that be the only argument which can be advanced by the advocates of the

suggested union, their position is, weak indeed; for I ask, what could the united colonies effect against the forces which could be brought against them? Assuming the population of the Canadas to be two and one-half millions, and that of the Lower Provinces half a million, can it be expected that we could, in case of invasion, offer successful resistance to the disciplined armies which a population exceeding twenty millions could send forth? The minds of hon. members may be seduced from a sober consideration of this question, by the idea that we would be laying the foundations of a great country, and I admit the influence of that feeling on my own mind last Session. But, Sir, I confess that a change has come over the spirit of my dream. What benefits are we to reap from the proposed reunion, for we were united up to 1769? New Brunswick has a large funded debt, in comparison to which our public liabilities, the fruitful subject of so much grumbling, are mere matter of moonshine. The public debt of the Island amounts to not more than £60,000 or £70,000, and we have the public domain to the credit of the country. Although the resolution submitted does not commit this House to the expression of any opinion on the subject of the union of the colonies, it is but right that the delegates, who may be appointed as the representatives of the Island at the proposed conference, should have their position fortified by the avowed sentiments of members of the Legislature—that they should be able to tell the representatives of the sister colonies what are the feelings of those whom they represent. I am decidedly of opinion that we should, as an act of common courtesy, assent to the appointment of delegates, if for no other purpose than that of hearing what propositions may be offered by the representatives of the other provinces. With this view, I shall support the resolution, but I entertain very decided objections to the proposed union. In New Brunswick, the Railway barely supports itself, and earns nothing towards repayment of the money borrowed for its construction. In looking over the Journals of the House of Assembly of that Province, I find that its Railway Debentures require no less than £58,000 annual interest, to be paid at Baring's, in London. In his speech on the Union of the Lower Colonies, the hon. Mr. Tupper, Provincial Secretary of Nova Scotia, said that the time had not yet arrived for an union with Canada because of the large debt of that Colony. "I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word," for the argument deduced from it, is applicable against our union with the other colonies. Canada is burdened with a debt of more than sixty millions of dollars, and there is an annual deficit in the revenue of a million. As to the idea attributed to the Imperial Government that these Colonies are able to bear the burden of defending themselves against the invader of a foreign foe, the sooner Great Britain awakes from that delusion the better. Our small annual appropriation of £400 for the volunteer organization is not passed without strong expressions of disapprobation, while Nova Scotia grants \$20,000 for that service. If we are to have a union, I should hope that it would be of a Federative, not Legislative, character, so that we might retain our Local Legislature, and our people have the management of our affairs. Our status, if united, would, I am bound to assume, be adjusted on the basis, either of territorial area or numerical ratio of population. If the first criterion be adopted, we would occupy a very inconsiderable position in the United Legislature. If our representation is to be regulated by population, the official statistics on that point afford but little prospect of Prince Edward Island exercising much influence in the halls of the United Colonies. The House of Assembly in Nova Scotia is composed of some 55 members, New Brunswick has 42 or 43, and in any political combination of the kind foreshadowed, we might expect to receive the treatment that Scotland and Ireland were subjected to when their separate Legislatures were abolished. I own, Mr. Chairman, is a feeling of surprise when I read the allusion made by the Hon.