

British system, that ever existed. We have but made a compact, subject to the approval of Parliament. So far as this Government is concerned, we are firmly committed to the scheme; but so far as the members of the Legislature are concerned, they are as free as air; but I am confident that this House will almost unanimously accept it, and not with changes and amendments, but as a whole—as the very best compromise arrangement that can be obtained.

HON. MR. HOLTON—We have not the treaty-making power.

HON. MR. BROWN—I remember a Government formed from that side of the House, and the honorable member for Hochelaga (Hon. Mr. DORION) will remember it too, which made a treaty respecting the building of the Intercolonial Railroad. The honorable member for Cornwall was Premier of that Government, and it does not lie in his mouth now to object to what he himself did. But the honorable gentleman is entirely wrong when he says we had no power to make this compact with the Maritime Provinces. We had full power, express instructions to enter into it.

HON. MR. HOLTON—Did the Parliament of England give you that power?

MR. BROWN—No; the honorable gentleman ought to know that the treaty-making power is in the Crown—the Crown authorized us specially to make this compact, and it has heartily approved of what we did. (Hear, hear.) But, Mr. SPEAKER, I am told, that the people of Canada have not considered this scheme, and that we ought not to pass it without appealing to the electors for their approval. Now, sir, a statement more incorrect than this, or more injurious to the people of Canada, could not be made. They not only have considered this scheme—for fifteen years they have been earnestly considering it—but they perfectly comprehend it. (Hear, hear.) If ever question was thoroughly debated in any country, the whole subject of constitutional change has been in Canada. There is not a light in which it could be placed that has not been thoroughly canvassed; and if the House will permit me, I will show from our historical record how totally absurd this objection is. The question of a Federal union was agitated thirty years ago, and here is the resolution adopted by both Houses of the Imperial Parliament so far back as 1837:—

That great inconvenience has been sustained by His Majesty's subjects inhabiting the provinces of Lower Canada and Upper Canada, from the want of some adequate means for regulating and

adjusting questions respecting the trade and commerce of the said provinces, and divers other questions wherein the said provinces have a common interest; and it is expedient that the legislatures of the said provinces respectively, be authorized to make provision for the joint regulation and adjustment of such their common interests.

In the instructions given to Lord DURHAM by the Imperial Government in 1838, this passage occurs:—

It is clear that some plan must be devised to meet the just demands of Upper Canada. It will be for your Lordship, in conjunction with the Committee, to consider if this should not be done by constituting some joint legislative authority, which should preside over all questions of common interest to the two provinces, and which might be appealed to in extraordinary cases, to arbitrate between contending parties in either; preserving, however, to each province its distinct legislature, with authority in all matters of an exclusively domestic concern. If this should be your opinion, you will have further time to consider what should be the nature and limits of such authority, and all the particulars which ought to be comprehended in any scheme for its establishment.

In Lord DURHAM's admirable report of 1839, I find this passage:—

The bill should contain provisions by which any or all of the other North American colonies may, on the application of the legislature, be with the consent of the two Canadas, or their united legislature, admitted into the union on such terms as may be agreed on between them. As the mere amalgamation of the Houses of Assembly of the two provinces would not be advisable, or give at all a due representation to each, a parliamentary commission should be appointed, for the purpose of forming the electoral divisions and determining the number of members to be returned on the principle of giving representation as near as may be, in proportion to population. The same commission should form a plan of local government by elective bodies, subordinate to the general legislature, and exercising a complete control over such local affairs as do not come within the province of general legislation. The plan so framed should be made an act of the Imperial Parliament, so as to prevent the general legislature from encroaching on the powers of the local bodies. A general Executive on an improved principle should be established, together with a supreme court of appeal for all the North American Colonies.

And here is the statement of Lord JOHN RUSSELL, in 1839, while introducing the original bill founded on Lord DURHAM's report:—

The bill provides for the establishment of a central district at Montreal and its neighbourhood, at which the Government shall be carried on, and