

as I have stated, was an invitation from St. John to the government and the united Legislatures of that country to come down and receive an ovation at their hands. Nor was the city of Halifax slow in following the example, for at a meeting convened by the Mayor upon a public requisition in this city, an invitation was extended by the citizens of Halifax to the Legislature of Canada, to come here and receive an ovation also at their hands—indicating, as far as it was possible, that the events which had taken place in Canada entitled the Government and Legislature of that country to courtesies such as had never been extended to them before. Although the Legislature of Canada was not able formally to accept that invitation, a number of gentlemen connected with various public positions in the country came down to St. John and Halifax. I need hardly tell this House how they were received. So far from having been met with any spirit of hostility, they were received with open arms, and the hospitalities of these two cities in the two provinces extended to them in a manner that was worthy of both. As late as a year ago, in August 1864, at the public entertainment which was given in this city, and before the Conference had met at Charlottetown—when these gentlemen were received here,—a member of the Canadian government, standing at the table, advocated in the most eloquent terms a Union of all British North America. That advocacy was received, as had always been the case in the city of Halifax, by every demonstration of enthusiasm and approval that it was in the power of an intelligent people to give; but more than that, on that occasion, I took the opportunity of observing that when I had moved a resolution for a Union of the Maritime Provinces, I did it with the conviction that an immediate consolidation of all British North America was impracticable—and that I hailed with the utmost satisfaction the evidence that had been since given that the smaller Union which we contemplated was likely to be merged into a far greater and more comprehensive scheme. On that occasion, I need not state to gentlemen who are resident in this city. Mr. Howe again responded in the terms which he had always been accustomed to use on this question. He said, although the hour was late it was of little consequence, for his voice had been heard in every chief city not only Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, but of Canada, advocating the consolidation of all British North America; and there he committed himself, in the most unqualified manner, in favour of such a union—declaring that it was the dream of his life, and that he would look forward to its realization with the highest satisfaction. I do not refer to this as attaching any great importance to what may fall from Mr. Howe or myself, but I call attention to these facts to show that when public men on various occasions gave in their hearty adhesion to a proposal to unite Canada with the Maritime Provinces, so far from the sentiments they propounded sinking them in public estimation—so far from the press and people of this country ex-

pressing their dissent from the course that was pursued—that in the light of the fact that a Conference was to be held at Charlottetown, and that a deputation of the Canadian Government were to attend this Conference with a view of endeavouring to accomplish the larger Union of British North America, as far as the public men of this or the other Provinces are concerned, there was every reason to believe that what was proposed met with the entire approval and the concurrence of the people. As I have already stated the Canadian deputation received—and after much consultation and deliberation, the most prominent public men in all these Provinces came to the conclusion that there was a fair and legitimate prospect to believe that at another conference they would be able to devise such measures for a Union as would secure the confidence, co-operation, and assent of all these Provinces. Under these circumstances the Canadian delegates returned home, and the Governor General, acting upon their advice, and under the sanction of the Crown, given in the most emphatic terms, invited the appointment of delegates from the maritime provinces for the purpose of taking into consideration the question of the wider Union. That action has been challenged as an unconstitutional proceeding. I will not, in an assembly like this, attempt any vindication of the strict constitutionality of such a course. Suffice it to say, there stood upon the journals of the legislature not only the approval of such a course as that, but the declaration of the Colonial Secretary that the British government would be ready to pay the utmost deference to any proposal—that might emanate from any scheme that might be agreed upon by the governments of the different provinces, and authorizing a conference to be held. The resolution which passed the house at its last session provided that whatever agreement was come to should receive the sanction of the different legislatures. No action, therefore, was proposed to be taken by the conference at Quebec which did not involve the same legitimate course to be taken. All that the legislature had demanded—all that the several legislatures and the imperial government as well had demanded—as the necessary constitutional course preliminary to change the constitution, was observed by the Quebec conference, and that was a proposal to arrange the scheme of union for these provinces which should first be submitted to the imperial government, then to the different legislatures of these provinces, previous to an application being made to the imperial authorities to give effect to the scheme by an act passed by the British parliament. I need not tell the house that a body of public men assembled at Quebec—similar to no other body that ever met together in this or any other country—who not only represented the governments but both leading political parties. The result of their labors was beyond that which the most sanguine person had a right to expect—that in the position which we considered British America to occupy the different public men representing the different parties and sections into which all