

who intend voting for these seventy-two resolutions, which in reality sanction this arrangement—because the Government have insisted upon it and urged it throughout this debate—will pause before they add other \$6,000,000 to the untold millions to which we shall be pledged by the adoption of the scheme now before the House. (Hear, hear.)

MR. FORTIER—In rising to speak at such an advanced stage of the debate, it is not my intention to occupy the attention of the House for any lengthened period, especially as the topic of Confederation which has been under consideration for several days past, has been pretty thoroughly exhausted. I do not, however, consider that I should be doing my duty were I to allow this question to pass without remark, and without stating to the House and to the country the reasons which have brought me to the determination to vote as I have resolved to vote on this great question of Confederation. What, I would ask, Mr. SPEAKER, do Ministers call upon us to do on this occasion? To pass an Address to Her Majesty, praying Her by a single stroke of the pen to cancel our present Constitution, and to substitute another based on the seventy-two resolutions adopted by the Conference at Quebec, held on the 10th October last, and which resolutions are now before the House. I am convinced that the Quebec Conference, when they framed the basis of our new Constitution, far from being actuated by any sentiment of disinterestedness, were on the contrary influenced by the desire of personal advancement. I may be deceived, Mr. SPEAKER, and I sincerely hope that I am. I hope that the electors of New Brunswick, who have just rejected the scheme of the Quebec Conference, and at the same time passed a direct vote of censure against the most illustrious men in that province, for having agreed to this scheme, and, by so doing, compromised the interests of their country—I hope, I say, that these electors have also been mistaken, knowing, as I do, that obedience must be yielded to the majority, and that, in spite of their triumphant opposition, Confederation will be imposed upon us as now projected. It is sought by a single stroke of the pen to abrogate our Constitutional Act, and to substitute for it a Constitution of the details of which we are altogether ignorant, of which, indeed, every effort is made to keep us in ignorance. We are urged to exchange what we now have or something that they propose to give us.

FRANKLIN has told us that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” I am one of those who would prefer the bird in the hand, and for that reason I am not prepared, without further guarantee, to change the Constitution of the country. (Hear, hear.) I hold to the Constitution of 1840, because it consecrates a great principle in favor of Lower Canada, that of equality of representation in the Legislature; and I adhere the more firmly to it, Mr. SPEAKER, when I bear in mind that it is one of the express conditions of my presence in this House as the representative of the county of Yamaska, and I do not intend to betray the confidence reposed in me. In relation to this subject, I will take the liberty of reading to the House extracts from two letters which have been addressed to me by two electors of great influence in my county:—

ST. MICHEL D'YAMASKA, 29th Jan., 1865.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—From the little information I have been able to obtain in relation to what has taken place in the House since the beginning of the session, I observe that the true patriots, far from being able to avert, will not even have the satisfaction of delaying, the storm which threatens our unhappy country. The French-Canadian egotists are, as usual, in the majority, especially in this nineteenth century—the age of progress it may be, but the age of selfishness, of hazardous speculations, in which conscience (now, alas! only a by-word) takes no part—the age of usurious loans, to the great detriment of the poor people, whom, not content with pillaging and ruining, it is now proposed, with the view of securing a few years of power and position, to deprive of their nationality, their laws and their religion. * * * What ought we to do under these circumstances, when we see our country threatened by its own children, allied with its bitterest foes? Treat the traitors with disdain, and maintain with firmness (no matter how few in numbers we may be) an energetic and constitutional opposition. It may be that at last the Catholic clergy will awake from their dream, and will manfully aid the Opposition, whose sole object is the preservation of its most cherished rights.

Mr. SPEAKER, I read such language with pride, and I now proceed to read the views of another of my electors, no less patriotic than the one whose letter I have just read:—

RIVIÈRE DAVID, 21st Feb., 1865.

DEAR SIR,—I have received a copy of the resolutions in relation to the projected union of the Provinces of British North America, and after having examined and studied them, and having read with care all that the papers on either side have to say for and against them, I beg to state as my opinion, that they are very far from meeting with my approval. Even were they better