

history, we shall find that it has never produced aught but lamentable dissension. (Hear, hear.) What is the present cry of the Opposition as regards the scheme of Confederation? It is this: you refuse an appeal to the people; you most unjustly hurry on the debate; you deny us all opportunity of moving amendments to the plan, or recording them on the journals of the House; and you are bent on imposing on us, without our consent, a Constitution no detail of which is made known to us, and of the general tenor of which our knowledge is also very imperfect. Now, Mr. SPEAKER, I beg to ask Ministers whether it would not be infinitely better for them to quiet all these apprehensions, and silence all complaints? Why should they hurry on the debate, I do not say unconstitutionally, but I do say with dangerous precipitancy? Why should they bar the moving of any amendment to the scheme, particularly as there is nothing pressing in the occasion, and as the aspect of the question is in many respects altered from what it was previous to these late events? I shall probably be told that I am wrong in saying there is nothing pressing in the occasion; that, on the contrary, events render the immediate passing of the measure absolutely necessary; that the defence of our frontier is a question which must be settled at once—that there is not a moment to be lost. Well, Mr. SPEAKER, I acknowledge, for my part, that if I vote in favor of the scheme of Confederation, it is not out of a feeling of the necessity of setting about our defence; for hitherto I have never had a thought that the Confederation of the provinces afforded any better means of defending the frontier than that which we have at present—(hear, hear)—inasmuch as we have already all opportunity of combined action to the fullest extent under the protecting arm of England; but this seems not to have entered the minds of the authors of the scheme. But I go further than this, and assert that the discussion which is daily going on on the subject of the proposed constitutional changes is agitating the public mind very strongly. As at a former epoch of our history, such changes necessarily tend to disturb the minds of the many; and this very natural agitation is attended with its dangers, and affords another proof that constitutions are not the work of a day—that time, and even a great deal of time, is necessary to settle the foundation of the social and constitutional edifice of the best disposed of the nations. The present Constitution of Great Britain is a proof of this. That is certainly well established,

but it has taken ages to bring it to what it now is. I say, then, that we should not be in too great a hurry, so as to raise discontent among the people, but that we ought to proceed with the more care and deliberation now that, as the Ministers themselves acknowledge, we are in imminent danger of war. If we are so liable to have war, I say that we are not in the best condition to undergo a sudden change of our Constitution, and that far from placing ourselves in a good attitude of defence to meet the imminent danger, we are perhaps weakening our position, by acting too strongly or prematurely on public opinion. I say then again, that those who would force our representatives to accept the measure without amendments, for the bare reason that we must prepare to defend ourselves in arms without loss of time, are acting without justifiable or sufficient reason. I regret deeply that the previous question has been moved, so as to reduce the friends of the Government to the necessity of voting on the measure before us without being able to move any amendment, and that in the face of a total change of circumstances. I pray for the forgiveness of the House for having spoken on the subject, but I considered it a duty to protest at once against the proceeding of the Government which I had not foreseen. I shall vote therefore against the motion before us, because I am in favor of amending the scheme of the Constitution, laying on the Government the whole responsibility for their conduct if they persist in denying us an opportunity of making some modifications in the present plan of Confederation.

HON. ATTY. GEN. CARTIER—I am glad that the hon. member for the county of Quebec has, with his customary candor, communicated to us his apprehensions. I have listened to him with great attention, and I am certain that there is no difference between his views and ours. We are perfectly agreed. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) I knew perfectly well, Mr. SPEAKER, before I rose to give explanations to the hon. member for the county of Quebec and to the House, that the few words I have just uttered would excite the laughter of the Opposition; for the moment these hon. gentlemen see a member who is usually a supporter of the Government, rise in this House and speak with some degree of animation on any measure of the Government, they are ready to conclude, from his animation, that the hon. member is opposed to the measure. I say again, Mr. SPEAKER,