

high road of progress and improvement. Truly, Mr. SPEAKER, if the bitterest enemy of Canada had had it in his power to invent an inclined plane on which he might place us to hurry us to ruin, he could not have done it better than the different political parties have done it within the last few years. Elections on elections, one Ministry succeeding another; one crying out, extravagance, the other issuing commissions of inquiry to try to make places for its friends—what, in short, has been the course of events for the last few years? Since the 21st May, 1862, have we not had four or five governments who have managed the affairs of the country? One we had which seemed to be “the darling of the nations,” the paragon government of economy and retrenchment, the MACDONALD-DORION Government. What did it do for the country? Nothing, absolutely nothing; it had not even the moral courage to stand by its own measures. In the beginning of February, 1864, it brought in a bill (that respecting sheriffs). Well, what did it do in the circumstances? Afraid of its own work, it stood aghast at the remonstrances of some of its own partisans, who were contumacious—despair fell upon the leaders—the camp was a scene of confusion; and lo! one fine day this Ministry, which was to bring back the golden age of happiness and prosperity, sank placidly to rest—became a thing of the past, and left “not a wreck behind” to mark its accession to power. In a word, that pattern Administration died in its virginity, died with the famous scheme of retrenchment in its hand, and a still-born “budget” on its conscience! (Continued laughter and cheers.) I ask every man of sense how many such governments as that we should require to take the ship of the country’s welfare into port—to redeem us from our unhappy condition—to calm the strife of parties—to settle the many questions, often irreconcilably incompatible with each other, which had so long agitated the different sections of the country—a strife which threatened to become perpetual? What would have become of us if a providential piece of good fortune had not brought together the men who compose the present Administration? Every one can conceive that the Coalition Government, the only possible one in such circumstances, came in just in the nick of time; and, as a proof of its fitness for its mission, it “took fortune by

the forelock,” as the proverb says, and cleverly made use of opportunity. In fact, three months after the present Ministry was formed, three of the Lower Provinces, comprehending the utility of a union among themselves, conceived the idea of forming one from which might flow strength and prosperity to all; being convinced that a state of disunion such as theirs had always been—their commerce paralyzed by hostile tariffs—was a political suicide. They therefore sent delegates to Charlottetown, to devise a plan among themselves for the purpose of solving, in some profitable manner, the difficulties which beset them, the three provinces. What course did our Government then take? The members of the Cabinet—too wise to disregard the importance of the movement—too statesmanlike to neglect its advantages—found means to take part in the proceedings at Charlottetown; and being convinced that a Federal union of all the Provinces of British North America would be the real salvation of the country, laid before the delegates at Charlottetown a large, well-digested scheme based on a regard for justice and equality in respect of the rights and privileges of all; a scheme by which each origin and each belief will enjoy full and complete protection; a scheme of Federal union, in a word, having for its apex the powerful axis of England; for its foundation, social, political and commercial prosperity; and for its cornerstone, constitutional liberty in all its amplitude and strength. (Cheers.) This idea of a Confederation of the provinces is not a new one. All who are in the slightest degree acquainted with the parliamentary history of the country, are aware that a plan for the Confederation of the British North American Provinces was one of the bases upon which the programme of the CARTIER-MACDONALD Administration rested in 1858. It may be asked—“Why should we have Confederation?” “Why should we not remain as we are?” It is impossible, and its impossibility is proved by the past. Let those who do not see the seasonableness of the Confederation look at what is going on on the other side of the line—what do they see there? The threatened abrogation of the Reciprocity treaty. The abrogation of the transit system is threatened. A passport system, which throws the greatest possible obstacles in the way of our free travel through the States, and does serious injury to the development of our trade, has been inaugurated. We have no means of com-