

Quebec scheme. Many gentlemen have hitherto spoken of the scheme then arranged, but I have been surprised that long as it has been before scarcely one syllable has been uttered in this debate in reference to it. It has been praised abroad as a great and magnificent scheme, but what is its position now? "But yesterday it might have stood against the world, now none so poor to do it reverence," and it is here, or not here just as men may choose.

We have heard something about the petitions presented to this house against Confederation, we have yet heard nothing of petitions in its favor. And now we are asked to deliberately ignore the expressed sentiments of this people: we are told that these petitions are to be disregarded, and that no notice is to be taken of the rights of the electors. We are reminded of the action of the British Parliament in dealing with the Reform question, and we are told that that measure involved an important change in the constitution of the country and no one ever contended that Parliament was incompetent to deal with it without reference to the people; but, will any one tell me that the question was not before the people of Great Britain before the last General Election? That is the answer which I give to those who assert that this legislature has the right to deal with an irrevocable change in the Constitution, and refer to the action of the British Parliament in justification of the step. The subject of Reform was, as I have stated, before the people of England previously to the General Election held there, and if it had not been for the influence of one of the greatest statesmen that England ever saw, that question would have had more bearing on the results of that election than it had; gentlemen, therefore, must not refer to that as any example for denying to the people of this country the opportunity of passing on the present measure. It has indeed been pretended that the people of this country are in favor of this important step, but I ask gentlemen around these seats if they can say so consistently with the honest and deliberate sentiments of their minds, unoperated upon by any pressure? Is there a majority here who will say that the majority of the people are in favor of the Quebec scheme? No sir, I will not be content with that, I will ask is there a majority of the people in favor of any union? I deny it, and I have some means of fortifying the assertion. In the course of the last two years since the question has been agitated in the country, there have been no less than three appeals to the constituencies of this Province, and they are not by any means the most inconsiderable of our constituencies. There is the county of Annapolis which for many years elected to a seat within these walls a gentleman who, without reference to politics, I would say was one of the first men in this country, and the fact of their returning that gentleman proves the electors of that county to be among the most intelligent constituencies of the Province. Since this question has been agitated that constituency has spoken, and how? By an immense majority it returned the present

member, Mr. Ray. Another constituency, one of the most populous and thriving in the Province, that of Lunenburg, was opened. Shall I be told that the question was not before the people of Lunenburg? I heard one of the representatives of that county, Mr. Kaulback, say to yesterday, but I have in my possession testimony that will confirm me in the statement that that constituency pronounced on this question when by a very large majority they elected the present member, Mr. Hebb. I go then to the township of Yarmouth, and the gentlemen who represent that constituency need not be ashamed of it—for if there be a portion of the province in which active industry and enterprise prevail, it is the township of Yarmouth. Her ships are on every sea. Look abroad at all quarters of the globe, and you see Yarmouth ships and Yarmouth men. When I am told, then, that the opinions of this constituency are to be disregarded, or that their views upon this measure were not expressed, I feel that I must turn a deaf ear to such statements, because they are abundantly contradicted by the facts and circumstances. But some gentlemen argue that on this question, of all questions, the people should not be appealed to, because the people would decide on other issues and not on this. From whom does this statement come? Does it not come from those who ought to use language more respectful,—language precisely the reverse—from the administration which the breath of the people has created? It comes from gentlemen who hold their offices by virtue of the popular voice, and yet the inhabitants of this country are to be told that they are incapable of pronouncing a judgment on this particular question; that other subjects would be introduced, and that no decision could be obtained upon this particular subject. Have the people lost all discernment and discrimination that this, the most important question that ever agitated the public mind, is one upon which no reliable opinion could be formed and expressed. Sir, I think very differently of the people; I believe they would appreciate the magnitude of the proposition, and while they would be disposed to condemn much of the public conduct of the administration, their intelligent discernment would lead them to sink all other considerations and all other questions of policy, in order that upon this they might pronounce the decisions of their minds and hearts. It will be perceived that I am for submitting this question to the people. Sir, I hold that in a matter which concerns their interests for all time to come, it is our duty to them. But taking the argument of the other side, and supposing that the people are not as intelligent as I assert they are, there is another mode of testing their opinions, and that is by submitting to them the question of Confederation, pure and simple. We are told that this is not a British practice—that there is no precedent for this; but I reply that we have on our statute book a precedent established by a gentleman long before the public eye, and now holding an important public position, I refer to the Judge in Equity. The