

form of Confederation ; but what I can never consent to is to vote for a Confederation of which I know neither the exact nature nor the details. The article which I have already quoted is one of those to which I desired more particularly to draw attention. I will now quote the 67th resolution. I find by this resolution "that the General Government will fulfil all engagements entered into, previous to the union, with the Imperial Government, for the defence of the country." Now, strange to say, the authors of this document do not even take the trouble to state by whom such engagements must be made. No, they simply assert the obligation in the terms of the resolution I have just quoted. Suppose our Government had entered into an engagement to the extent of fifty millions of dollars, shall we—can we—affirm that the engagement was a necessary one, by voting for the measure without knowing the nature of the engagement? Coming now to the 68th resolution, I find: "The General Government will cause to be completed, without delay, the Intercolonial Railway, from Rivière du Loup, through New Brunswick, to Truro, in Nova Scotia." Now, hon. gentlemen, I maintain that this is another portion of the plan with which we are not acquainted. We do not know what is to be the cost of this railway thus described in the resolution I have just read. Here, again, we are kept in the most complete ignorance by the present Government. An honorable member of this House has declared, that though the Intercolonial Railway were to cost fifty millions of dollars, we should not hesitate to support a measure for carrying it out; for, even at that price—that exorbitant price—it would be for the interests of the country. Well, I ask you, would this House be acting in accordance with that spirit of wisdom and prudence which ought to characterize it, by voting blindly for such an enormous expenditure as that? I do not believe it, and for my part, I do not hesitate an instant to say that I would refuse. I am well aware, it is true, that the construction of this gigantic railway cannot cost so large a sum; but it is generally admitted, both in this House and out of it, that the work cannot be done for less than twenty millions. Moreover, does it not often happen that public works estimated to cost, say one million of dollars, are found to have cost, when finished, double and more than double that amount? This may happen with the

Intercolonial Railway, which, it is perfectly clear, will cost more than is supposed; and I repeat it, this House ought to hesitate before sanctioning such an enormous expenditure out of a public treasury already heavily charged, and which will scarcely be in a more flourishing position when the various British provinces of this continent are united under the Confederation. I am justified, then, in demanding that the details of the plan should be made known to us before we are called upon to sanction it. I have already stated that I do not pretend to be opposed to Federation of the provinces in every possible shape—that I might support a Confederation not of too onerous a character for this country—but it is obviously quite impossible for me to support a project of this kind, with which I am unacquainted, in its details and as a whole. It appears to me that the Ministry cannot complain if, under these circumstances, we vote against a project which we desired to know fully in order to form our opinions concerning it, and to ascertain that of the people we represent. I do not think it can be pretended that this House is not entitled to make so just and reasonable a request. As I have shown, hon. gentlemen, if we accept the resolutions presented to us, we endanger the rights of the minorities in both sections of the province; we expose ourselves to the payment of enormous sums for the construction of a railway which may prove to be utterly useless for the defence of the country. It seems to me that, before undertaking such onerous charges, we ought to reflect deeply and to weigh well all possible chances of such serious eventualities. I am quite aware that certain hon. members of this House will never yield to the reasons I have advanced, nor shall I undertake to bring them round to my views, for I feel that all my efforts must be useless. The fact that we refuse to accept the measure proposed to us before we are acquainted with it, certainly does not imply, as it is stated and supposed, that we are opposed to every idea of Confederation. Another provision of the project which we cannot approve is that by which the constitution of the Legislative Council is based on the nominative principle, instead of the elective principle which now prevails, as regards that branch of the Legislature, under our own Government. I have already had occasion to express my opinion as to the constitutional