

riety in this House, that before the Quebec scheme of Confederation was in existence, I had placed on record my decided approval of an union of British America on equitable terms. I think I will have no difficulty in shewing that though prominent in my opposition to the Quebec scheme of Union, I have always been favorable to the abstract idea of Union.—My first appearance before the public in opposition to that scheme was at a mass meeting of the citizens of Halifax in December, 1861, about nine months after the above declaration in Parliament, and although I spoke under circumstances of much irritation, I did not allow any personal annoyance to draw me into antagonism to the great principle of Colonial Union. Looking back, sir, to that occasion, and recollecting the excitement that marked it, I find no ordinary degree of satisfaction at the emphatic manner in which I preserved my consistency on the great principle involved in that discussion. I said:—

“I do not wish, Mr. Mayor, that my appearance on this platform to-night should be construed into opposition to an Union of British America on fair terms. I am not opposed to, but on the contrary, would support an Union based on sound principles and equitable terms. But the more I investigated the subject, the more reason do I find to fear that an equitable Union with Canada is not easily attainable. I am not willing to purchase Confederation on conditions disastrous to the people of Nova Scotia. These are the reasons why I oppose the measure by which Confederation is now to be secured. I cannot ratify the improvident bargain our delegates have made, because it is unjust to this Province. It is a bargain in which the advantages are all on one side, and all against us.”

I repeat, sir, when I look back to the period at which these remarks were uttered—when I remember the excitement and personal acrimony that marked, in some instances, the discussion of this subject in Temperance Hall, I am exceedingly gratified to-day, that no temporary provocation could induce me to denounce all union, as others did; but that I wisely contented myself with hostility to the particular scheme then under consideration. I do not deny that in the warmth of an exciting platform discussion I may not have used language that I in times of greater coolness would not have uttered. But no candid man would think of binding another too strictly to every expression used before an excited popular assemblage, amid the cheers of his friends and the hisses of his opponents. It is only proper to recollect that everything I then said—every argument I advanced—was directly solely to the end of defeating the Quebec Resolutions. When the question came before the Legislature at a late period last session, I intended to have fully explained my position and views, but in common with a number of gentlemen on both sides—for reasons which will be found in the reported debates—I denied myself the pleasure of speaking on it at any length. In the few remarks I did make, however, I find the following decided reiteration of all my previous declarations:—

“If I have any desire for an union, it is for the larger one. The opinion I held last year I hold now. My opposition has not been to union in the abstract, but to the terms on which it was secured. I defy any one to find a single passage in anything I have said which proves that I am opposed to an Union on equitable terms.”

Sir, I do not think I require to say a single word in addition to what is contained in the official records of this House, to show that from my first appearance in this Legislature up to the present time, I have been favorable to an union of these Provinces. I am chargeable with no sudden conversion to that opinion—nay, more, I am chargeable with no inconsistency in regard to it. Every one who understands the difference between the principle of a measure and its details, is well aware that in supporting the principle of any scheme a party does not commit himself to its details. The absurdity of any other assumption is too apparent to call for comment. In the same way, in opposing the details of a measure, it does not follow that we oppose its principle. I do not make these obvious remarks for gentlemen in this House, but for those elsewhere who may not as readily appreciate the distinction.

What, then, has been my position on this great question up to the present time? My position has been that of an uncompromising opponent of the Quebec scheme, yet an advocate of Union. While, however, my hostility to the Quebec resolutions has not diminished during the last eighteen months the subject has been agitated, I am not prepared to assert that my attachment to the principle of Union during the same period, has not increased. Sir, I frankly admit that it has increased. I am more firmly convinced at the present moment than ever, of the desirability of an Union of British America. There are many reasons to-day that did not exist two years ago, why every British American who is not insensible to the logic of events, should desire an Union that would tend to consolidate the strength, develop the resources, protect the rights, and promote the mutual interests of these provinces. Sir, the Provinces of British North America are in no ordinary period of their history—and that man is heedless of the signs of the times—is heedless of events that are daily and hourly transpiring around him, who exhibits indifference to, or affects to disregard danger in, the present state of public affairs on this continent. I need not remind hon. gentlemen that the whole aspect of things around us have been changed within one short year. The neighboring republic, twelve months ago, was in the throes of a death-struggle, which threatened its disruption, has since emerged from the ordeal, claiming the reputation of one of the first military nations of the world. Her military prestige will not diminish the characteristic arrogance of her international policy. It will certainly not lessen her disposition to offensiveness in her intercourse with foreign nations, as it has increased her necessities; it will not lessen her desire to aggrandize herself at the expense of her neighbors. We have grounds of apprehension in this respect peculiar to ourselves. We know that the late war in America has created a feeling of animosity for some fancied grievances, among some classes of the American people towards Great Britain and these colonies. I need not specify these assumed grievances; they are familiar to every one. They may culminate at no distant day in a war between the two countries. They have already culminated in a species of commercial warfare, aimed at the prosperity of British America. Does any one doubt that