

ed and refuted—that the people had not had a full opportunity of discussing and reflecting upon. Therefore it is that I shall feel myself at liberty, as a representative of one of the most important counties in Nova Scotia, to state in a very brief and concise manner the reasons which induce me to support the resolution before the house.

There is one argument which has been used by the opponents of the scheme which requires consideration. I admit that, if it be true, it is a fundamental argument, for it lies at the very basis of the question we are discussing. It is one which should therefore be fully and satisfactorily answered before we ask the people of Nova Scotia to accept this measure at our hands. That argument, if I understand it aright, and as it has been advanced by all the speakers on the opposite side, and more particularly by the only lawyer who is supporting the opposition, is this: that we are not in a position constitutionally to pass on the measure in this Legislature; that this House, in its legislative capacity, is not competent to decide upon this important measure, affecting as we all admit it does to a large degree, the rights and interests of the people, without a reference to them at the polls. If this be true, we are attempting to discuss a question with which we have no right to deal—we are assuming a power and authority which the constitution does not invest us with—and we would be guilty of one of the highest crimes of which public men can stand convicted before the people who have entrusted their rights to their hands. If, however, as I contend we have a right to pass upon this question under the constitution handed down to us from the earliest days of constitutional authority, then the question assumes a different aspect, and we have only then to consider whether it is not for their benefit and welfare that the people should seek by this union to become an integral part of what in a short time must be one of the commanding nationalities of the world.

I must say that I was astonished not only to hear a lawyer but other members of this Legislature who from their position, ought to be somewhat versed in constitutional knowledge—for I need not tell you it does not require a legal mind to understand the general principles of constitutional law upon which the rights and interests of this Parliament are based—attempt to delude this House with the style of argument resorted to by the hon. member for Halifax and the hon. member for Guysborough in dealing with this important branch of the subject. The hon. member for Halifax, who is one of the oldest members of this Legislature, and who has taken an active part in all the discussions which have agitated this country, for a long time, has no excuse for misinterpreting those principles of constitutional law with which he should be familiar. Much less should the hon. member for Guysborough, a gentleman of legal attainments, who has filled the position of Speaker of this House, attempt to deal with a question of such magnitude and dogmatically

assert doctrines in constitutional law without asserting a single authority in support of his argument. In propounding an argument radically striking at what I consider one of the highest privileges of this Legislature, he ought to have given us the result of his reading, and have shown this House and country at least one instance in the whole constitutional history of England where the right of Parliament to deal with a question like this was denied. I challenge the hon. member and any gentleman in this House who assumes the same views, to show me in the whole constitutional history of England down to the present time a single case in which it was contended that the Parliament of England, or of any Colony enjoying the blessing of the British constitution, were not absolutely and constitutionally authorized in their legislative capacity to discuss and finally decide upon any measure which, in their opinion, touched the rights and interests of the people they represented. I shall not occupy any time in debating a question which is as plain as the sun at noon-day. But I feel it important that the people of this country should be rightly informed on the question, and see how baseless are the assertions of those who contend that the representatives of this House—that the Legislature of this country, for some reasons, have been arrogating to themselves a power which is not delegated to them by the constitution and are bartering away most unjustifiably (to quote the hon. member for Yarmouth) the rights and liberties of the province. In order that the people and the country may be satisfied on this point I will read one or two authorities of very high standing—which are recognized in England as of the highest weight in matters of constitutional law and practice. May in his work on the privileges of Parliament says:—

“The Legislative authority of Parliament extends over the United Kingdom and all its Colonies and foreign possessions, and there are no limits to its power of making laws for the whole empire than those which are incident to all sovereign authority—the willingness of the people to obey, or their power to resist. Unlike the Legislatures of many other countries it is bound by no fundamental charter or constitution; but has itself the sole constitutional right of establishing and altering the laws and Government of the empire.”

In addition to this I shall quote the opinion of one of the highest authorities on all such matters—from a book which is not only of the highest authority, but is familiar to every man of ordinary reading and information. Sir W. Blackstone, treating of the power of Parliament and quoting from Coke, says:

“The power and jurisdiction of Parliament, say Sir Edward Coke, is so transcendent and absolute that it cannot be confined, either for cause or persons within any bounds. And of this high court, he adds it may be truly said: “*Si antiquitatem, species, est vetustissima, si dignitatem est honoratissima, si jurisdictionem, est opacissima.*” It hath sovereign uncontrollable authority in the making, confirming, enlarging, restraining, abrogating, repealing, revising and expounding of laws concerning matters of all possible denominations, ecclesiastical or temporal, civil, military, maritime, or criminal; this being the place where that absolute, despotic power, which