

and there would be no risk in submitting it. Where is then the danger of delay?—and delay is all we ask for. What struck me very much in the eloquent and able address of the Honorable Commissioner of Crown Lands was, that he never touched upon the real question of the amendment. It is true he said delays were dangerous, delay would lose the measure, but not a shadow of argument did he advance in proof of this view. I think delay is safety, in that it will enable the country and the Legislature to look into the scheme, to weigh all its advantages and disadvantages, if it has any, and so more certainly secure the passing of it if good, and the rejection of it if the reverse. Of course, honorable gentlemen, divers views may exist as to the way in which the opinion of the people on this question is to be obtained. I am not to be deterred from expressing my views by the taunt of republicanism; a sneer never disturbs me when I have good ground for what I do or say. I have had to bear with many a sneer on account of my adhesion to the temperance cause, but they never moved me from my course. My belief is that the views of the people may be ascertained without any such delay as will endanger the scheme. It is to be presumed that the debate will not extend beyond a week or two, in both Houses. A very short time after it is concluded, and the pamphlets containing the speeches printed, a direct vote of the people might be taken with propriety and safety. The proposition to submit the plan to the vote of the people seems at the first glance not to be British—our prejudices rise against it. We are, however, not to be guided by prejudices, but by reason and reflection; and if we can find the best means of clearly and satisfactorily ascertaining what the people wish, that means ought to be adopted, call it by what name you may. I think that to put the matter to a direct vote in this way is the best plan. The people should be told: "Here is the measure; will you take it or will you not?" We should not ask them to discuss amendments; we could not bring the people of all the provinces together for such a purpose, and if we allowed amendments to be discussed, we should have inextricable confusion. The plain question should be proposed: Do you wish for this Confederation or not—yes or no?

HON. MR. ROSS—No power to alter its details?

HON. MR. VIDAL—No. That is the way the question is proposed to this House, and if it be wrong to submit it thus to the people, it is also wrong to submit it in such a manner to the Legislature. (Hear, hear.) An additional motive for suggesting this mode of proceeding is, that I should be extremely unwilling to subject myself to the censorious remarks of hon. gentlemen in the other Chamber who might reasonably say, if we propose to have a dissolution and a new election on the subject, "It is all very well, but you keep your seats, while you send us home." I do not indeed see why we might not with great propriety wait until the next general election, when, after two years of reflection and discussion, the people would be still better able to give an intelligent vote. I can see no objection to the wish of the people being thus ascertained in this *par excellence* constitutional way; but as ministers tell us we cannot wait, then I say, let us rather have a direct vote of the people on the scheme than precipitate a general election. I should prefer a direct vote to a general election, because during an election other influences are at work besides purely political ones. In many places the personal popularity of a candidate outweighs the political leaning of the electors; in others, a well-filled purse carries the day, or some local question prejudices a constituency and influences the minds of the voters. But upon a scheme such as this, if submitted directly to the country, none of these considerations would have any effect, and the electors would be guided by patriotism alone. So that while constitutionally the House represents the will of the people, and no fault could be found if the House, after a new election, were to pass upon the matter, still the object desired, viz., to know the desire of the people, would be more expeditiously and less expensively attained by a direct vote. It is of no use to call this method "Yankee" or "Republican." It is well known that it prevailed as far back as the days of ancient Rome.

HON. MR. LETELLIER DE ST. JUST—You may call it French, too.

HON. MR. VIDAL—Yes, or, if you please, you may call it imperial; it has been resorted to in France and in Mexico. It would certainly in this case be fair—no one could have any object for tampering with the votes of the people, or obtaining a decision which was not a