

FRIDAY, March 3, 1865.

MR. PERRAULT—MR. SPEAKER, it is not without a degree of hesitation easy to be understood that I venture to give my reasons for my vote on the question of the Confederation of the Provinces of British North America. I hesitate, because I am conscious how much I fall short in respect of solid information and political experience to enable me to form a healthy and reliable judgment of the various reasons to be alleged on both sides of that vast question, the decision of which is pregnant with such serious consequences to the future welfare of the country. A further cause of my hesitation, MR. SPEAKER, is that I see on the Ministerial benches men grown old in political warfare—men who for many years have been the leaders and guides of the majorities in the two Canadas—supporting the scheme now submitted to us, and assuring us that it is the only remedy for all the difficulties of our present position. Still another cause of my hesitation is that I am aware of the great severity with which the Ministerial press visits all the adversaries of the plan of Confederation, and of the small measure of justice which it metes out in estimating the motives of those who oppose this constitutional scheme, however upright their characters or honest the motives which actuate them. But I should consider myself wanting in my duty as a member if, swayed by these misgivings, I did not state my motives in this House for my opposition to the project of Confederation. On so important a question it is a duty to my constituents, it is a duty which I owe to myself, that I should justify the responsibility which I take upon myself in resisting a measure which is so strongly supported in this House, and I should think I failed in my duty and was unworthy of the seat which I fill in it, if I did not add force to my opposition by citing the history of the past, by portraying the prosperity of the present, and by pointing out the dangers to be feared in the future which is preparing for us. I have been long studying the general question of a Confederation, and I am of opinion that the Provinces of British North America are destined to form, at some future time which may be more or less remote, a vast Confederation, in which the two races of French and English origin will be seen struggling in the career of progress for the common

prosperity of both; and for the better convenience of studying the question, I visited the Lower Provinces in 1863, by way of the Gulf, and in 1864 by the Bay of Fundy. I am bound to say that I found the people everywhere in easy circumstances, and intelligent, and doing honor to that part of the country. I was then enabled to appreciate the advantages and the inconveniences attending on the decision of the question of Confederation generally. On my return from my last journey, which I made in the month of August, 1864, in company with a certain number of the members of both Houses, it was said by the press that I had in several companies declared myself favorable to the plan of a Confederation of all the provinces. At that time the Conference at Charlottetown had not taken place, and public opinion had already busied itself with classifying the members of this House as favorers or opponents of Confederation. I had already, at that time, publicly expressed my opinion on the question through the press, in order that I might bring it under the notice of my constituents, and I must declare that the opinion which I then expressed coincides with the line of conduct to which I still adhere, and that I have not found it necessary to alter my position in any one point from what it then was. In order that I may show this in the clearest manner, I shall read what I wrote in the month of August last, as perfectly explanatory of what I always thought of the scheme of confederating the Provinces of British North America. Here is what I wrote:—

This question of serious import, on which the minds of all our political world are so busy, in the present crisis, is so difficult of solution, that it would be an act of presumption in me to attempt even to discuss it, while our public men of the highest mark are still doubtful whether to favor it or not. As the *Minerve*, however, in its last number, claims me as one of the new converts to the great scheme of Confederation, I should think myself wanting to my duty and my convictions if I failed to let the world know my impressions of the present position, as I understand it. Those who consider the inexhaustible resources of the Provinces of British North America have no doubt that we possess all the elements of a great power. In territory we have a tenth part of the habitable globe, capable of supporting a population of 100,000,000 of persons. Bounded on the east by the Atlantic, on the west by the Pacific, our territory is further accessible by the navigation of the internal seas, which bound it on the south. Our rivers complete the incomparable net-work of communica-