

Reserve Acts, have been finally and peaceably disposed of, not possibly without injustice to a few, but certainly to the satisfaction of the community at large. Yet all those things, though of the greatest importance to us in Canada, sink into insignificance in comparison with that now before this House. While they related to our own affairs only, and were designed to promote the peaceful working of our own province, the question which we have now to pronounce upon concerns and relates to a Constitution for all the provinces of British North America, and for a country which may eventually comprise half a continent, and extend in one unbroken chain from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. (Cheers.) But although the consideration of this great question has consumed a good deal of the time of this House, and though it is one of such great importance, and so wide in its extent that it does not excite those strong personal and party feelings in the minds of honorable members which much less important questions, of a more local nature, generally excite, still, sir, I think there is no one who looks at the future of this country for which we are called upon to act, who can avoid coming to the conclusion that the question is one deserving of so much deliberate consideration at our hands, that no amount of time can be considered wasted in debating and deciding upon it. Yet Mr. SPEAKER, this is no new question. It has been brought up several times in Parliament, and before the people, and has occupied the attention of our ablest men, more or less, for the past forty or fifty years. It has been presented, theoretically, to the minds of the public of every province in British North America, in articles and pamphlets that have been written upon it; but now for the first time, by an extraordinary combination of events such as may never occur again, it presents itself to those empowered to deal with it practically and to give it life and vitality. (Hear, hear.) We have a great responsibility resting upon us with reference to the decision we shall come to on this important question. When I say that there has been an extraordinary combination of events, I think not the least extraordinary was the coming together of the leading men from all parts of the provinces, entertaining widely different and hostile views, yet determining to keep those views in abeyance while they

devised a scheme for the benefit of our common country. When before has the spectacle been witnessed of the leaders of adverse political camps surrendering that advantage which a resistance to any great change must always give in party politics, and meeting together to settle upon a common ground of action? This we saw last summer in the meeting of the delegates from all the provinces. Many of these gentlemen must have known that they risked their political positions, and we now know it in a practical way. But far better for a public man to be defeated in a great cause than to succeed in a bad one. (Hear, hear.) We cannot look upon the action of those men without conceding to them, first of all, a great amount of credit for the honorable and patriotic spirit which they evinced. Whatever views we may hold of their judgment, it must be conceded on all hands that their conduct deserves a high meed of praise. (Hear, hear.) But when we see this question taken up in all the provinces, and receiving so much attention in England, and even in other portions of Europe, in so short a period of time, I think we must feel that there must be some great overruling cause at work to induce so vast an amount of attention to be given to the subject. I have examined the question carefully in this aspect, and I venture to express an opinion respecting the cause, by reference to the history of nations. I recollect in a speech from Lord MACAULAY, in addressing the University of Aberdeen I think it was, speaking of the events of 1848, the remark occurs that since the invasion of the Huns civilization never ran such risks as in that year. (Hear, hear.) Its dangers passed away, but the results remain. The wave which threatened to submerge, obeying a natural law, retired beyond low-water mark, and has left exposed more than one coast. Small nations seem not to be considered, the faith of treaties is laughed at, and in this boasted age of civilization the doctrine that might is right prevails as strongly as in the seventeenth century. (Hear, hear.) The Danes, a brave and virtuous people, have been exposed to a hopeless war with Austria and Prussia, chiefs of the Teutonic race, while England and France remonstrated, by words and protocols, but acted not. The iron heel of Russia has crushed out the last sparks of freedom in Poland—long-suffering Poland, for whom so much sentiment has been expended, and free En-