



Monday, 7th May, 1896.

House in Committee on various Despatches and Papers.  
—Mr. JOHN YAO in the Chair.

#### CONFEDERATION QUESTION.

Hon. the Leader of the Government (J. C. POPE). With respect to the important question of Confederation, I do not at present intend to say more than that I hold in my hand certain Resolutions in which are embodied my views concerning that question, and which are most decidedly adverse to the scheme of Union as propounded and agreed to at the Quebec Conference. To hon. members holding the same opinion as myself concerning that scheme, these Resolutions will, I apprehend, be accepted as a sufficiently full and satisfactory declaration of our sentiments concerning it. To some, however, whose response to the proposed union may be little less than my own, they may, probably, be considered too strong; and, perhaps, by others, not strong enough. I shall, however, submit them to this Committee in their present form; and it will be for them to modify, abridge, enlarge, or accept them in their present form just as the majority, in their wisdom, may determine. The great reason why we protest against anything in the shape of Union, is our dread of being swamped by the Canada. When the scheme was before this House in the session of 1885, it was condemned by a majority on each side. As respects the Executive, one or two members of it are, I regret to say, favourable to it, but the majority are strenuously opposed to it. That, however, as respects the discussion of the question, it has of little consequence, for opposition to the scheme is not now to be offered by any part of the policy of the Cabinet, and all parties are quite free to discuss the question wholly upon its own merits, and quite untrammelled by political ties or considerations. Two members of the Cabinet were Delegates to the Quebec Conference, and to the Conference held by that Confederation; none expressed themselves more strongly in respect of the Scheme of Union projected by it than they did; and, for their consistent adherence to the convictions concerning it, which they then avowed, surely even such members may be the most opposed to the Union, and have no right whatever to persuade or condemn them; and neither do I believe any one of us arrogates to himself or assumes such a right. These gentlemen have, ever since the question arose, acted with integrity, in the most honest and conscientious, and in the perfect good faith. I speak more particularly of the Hon. the Solicitor General (Mr. Hargrave), whose conduct with

reference to the projected Union, has, throughout, been so open, candid, and honorable, that honestly to impute it, in any phrasing, is held to be morally impossible on the part of the most sincere opponent of the project. I have said that some hon. members, although in the main approving of the Resolutions, may think them too strong; it, therefore, appears to me to be only right that, before we enter upon a discussion of them, I should explain the reason why they are so strongly worded. It is this: Great fears are entertained by the public mind that the Government, in pursuance of the same course which it seems, is about to be adopted by Canada and Nova Scotia, and, perhaps, by New Brunswick, may be induced to send delegates to London for the purpose of conferring with the Imperial Government on the Confederation Scheme; and that, although such delegates, if sent by our Government, might be instructed to oppose our being included in the Scheme, and they themselves should be sincere to their intention to do so, yet, when assembled in conference on the question with the British Deputies, who are desirous that the Confederation should be accomplished, and with delegates from the other Provinces, whose mission will be to endeavour to induce the Imperial Government to frame, and carry through the British Parliament, a Bill to declare and establish the Confederation, they might be induced to change their views and assent to the Scheme, as, perhaps, originally modified in compliance with the suggestions of the Imperial Government; and so eventually Prince Edward Island, even against the will of our people, might be made a member of the Confederation, or Provinces of British America. It is to prevent this, warned by experience, the Resolutions are so strongly worded. What has taken place once more, under similar influences, takes place again. The hon. gentlemen then stated by what pressure the Legislature of Prince Edward Island had, in the Session of 1888, been induced to appoint His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor to appoint delegates to confer with delegates from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, touching the expediency of a Union of the three Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, under one Government and Legislature. The Report of the said Delegates to be laid before our own Legislature. He then went on to state that he having been arranged that the Delegates so to be appointed by the Government of these three Provinces should hold their Conference in Charlottetown, Canada, at that time engaged in considering the necessity of a change in its constitution—indulgent permission to be proposed by Delegation at the Conference, and their request having been courteously complied with, the issue of the Conference—of which, however, no report has yet been given to the public—was, through the influence which the Canadian Delegation brought to bear upon the Conference, a resolution to hold a further Conference at Quebec, with the consent of the Governments of the Lower Provinces, for considering the feasibility of a Union upon a larger basis than that originally contemplated by the Maritime Provinces. That Conference was held accordingly; our Delegates, if not wholly by its part, were induced to give their assent to the scheme of Confederation; and it is not only, with the intention of convincing the Imperial Government that the people of Prince Edward Island are most decidedly opposed to a Union with Canada upon any terms, but also to prevent the possibility of the Government sending delegates to the London Conference without assent to the same in defiance of the opposition to the will of the people as declared through their parliamentary representatives, that the wording of the Resolutions are so strong and conclusive. I

shall, said the hon. gentleman; say no more upon the matter at present, although, perhaps, when it has progressed a little, I may have some observations to enter regarding the matter. The hon. member said that the Hon. the Solicitor General had said, "I will now submit the Resolutions to the Committee—to be as I have before said, modified, softened, or strengthened according to the will and pleasure of the majority; and, to that end, I beg leave to suggest, Mr. Chairman, that, in the first place, it will be proper for you to read the whole of them as they were before the Committee."

The Chairman then read the Resolutions as here below given:—

"This House having had under consideration the message of His Excellency the Lieut. Governor communicating a Despatch from the Right Hon. Edward Cardwell, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonial Department, upon the subject of a Federation of the British North American Provinces, and having most carefully and earnestly considered the project is all in favour of—

"Resolved, As the deliberate opinion of this House, that any Union of the British North American Colonies which would embrace Prince Edward Island, upon the terms and principles set forth in the Resolutions of the Conference of Quebec, held on the 11th October, 1884, would not only be unjust to the inhabitants of this Colony, but prove disastrous to their dearest and most cherished rights and interests as a free people, enjoying the blessings of a priceless constitution guaranteed to them by the Imperial Government of Great Britain.

"That, considering the isolated, peculiar and exceptional position of Prince Edward Island, as contrasted with the other British North American Provinces and Colonies, that House deems it to be its duty as the Constitutional Representative of the people of Prince Edward Island, to withdraw the assent so clearly and unequivocally declared by the House in the Resolutions passed by it, in its last Session, upon the subject of a Union of the British North American Colonies, and afterwards communicated by the joint Address of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly of this Colony to Her Majesty's Imperial Government.

"Resolved further, That even if a Union of the Continental Provinces of British North America should have the effect of strengthening and vindicating more closely together those Provinces, or advancing their material and commercial interests, this House cannot admit that a Federal Union of the North American Provinces and Colonies which would include Prince Edward Island, could ever be accomplished upon terms that would prove advantageous to the interests and well-being of the people of this Island; and if, notwithstanding, and even if, it must ever remain, from the neighboring Provinces, by an insurmountable barrier of ice for many months in the year; and this House deems it to be its sacred and imperative duty to declare and record its conviction, as it now does, that any Political Union of the North American Colonies, that would embrace this Island, would be as hostile to the feelings and wishes, as it would be opposed to the best and most vital interests, of its people.

"Resolved further, That while this House cannot assent to a Federal Union of this Island with the other Colonies, they recognize it to be the duty of this Colony to contribute, from its local resources, towards its defence, in due and just proportion to its means.

Hon. Mr. KELLY. I approve of every word of these Resolutions; and, I believe, the majority of the Committee will heartily agree to them. My determination is to adhere to every word of them; although, if they could be made stronger, I would wish that they were.

Mr. SINCLAIR. He was pleased to see Resolutions of the nature tabled by the Hon. Leader of the Government. He believed that fears were entertained throughout the country as to the action of the Government on this question. The Government of the other Provinces have acted so unconstitutionally, and seem so determined to force Confederation.