

advised a dissolution of Parliament before submitting this proposition, and that it was unprecedented and dangerous for the existing House to deal with the question. Sir R. PEELE took high grounds against the doctrine, declaring that whatever may have been the circumstances that may have taken place at the election, he never would sanction the view that any House of Commons is incompetent to entertain a measure which is necessary for the well-being of the country. He cited in proof of the soundness of this principle Mr. PITT's observations when a similar doctrine was proposed at the time of the union of England and Ireland, as it had been at the time of the union with Scotland. This view had been maintained in Ireland very vehemently, but it was not held by Mr. FOX, and only slightly hinted at by SHERIDAN, in reply to whom Mr. PITT defended the constitutional system that Parliament, without any previous appeal to the people, had a right to alter the succession to the throne, to disfranchise its constituents or associate others with them. "There could not," observed Sir R. PEELE, "be a more dangerous example, a more purely democratic precedent, if I may so say, than that this Parliament should be dissolved on the ground of its incompetency to decide on any question of this nature."

I think, sir, that that is a very strong argument; and here is another, from volume 35, page 857, of the *Parliamentary History of England*:—

The Parliament of Great Britain that had agreed to the legislative union with Ireland, incorporated with itself the members for Ireland, and then commenced the first session of the Parliament of the United Kingdom by electing a new Speaker and observing all the formalities usual upon the commencement of a new parliament without any previous dissolution."

Next, Mr. SPEAKER, I will take a quotation from an eminent authority of one of the most democratic countries in the world—a country whose people boast that nothing can be done without their sanction. I refer to the United States of America, and the work I now cite is SEDGWICK on *Constitutional Law*. Speaking of "cases where the Legislature has sought to divest itself of its real powers," he says:—

Efforts have been made in several cases, by state legislatures, to divest themselves of the responsibility of their functions by submitting statutes to the people; but these proceedings have been held, and very rightly, to be entirely unconstitutional and invalid. The government of the state is democratic, but it is a representative democracy in the legislature.

I shall make another extract from the *Constitutional History of England*, page 316, on the same subject:—

Upon this prevalent disaffection, and the gen-

eral dangers of the established government, was founded that measure so frequently arraigned in later times, the substitution of septennial for triennial parliaments. The ministry deemed it too perilous for their master, certainly for themselves, to encounter a general election in 1717; but the arguments adduced for the alteration, as it was meant to be permanent, were drawn from its permanent expediency. Nothing can be more extravagant than what is sometimes confidently pretended by the ignorant, that the legislature exceeded its rights by this enactment; or, if that cannot be legally advanced, that it at least violated the trust of the people, and broke in upon the ancient Constitution.

Sir, I think that these are pretty strong precedents on the subject, especially as I find not one precedent for submitting the question to the people. I do think that we owe and ought to pay to the wishes of the people every deference; and if I believed that any large portion of the people of Western Canada, or of the constituency which I represent, were in favor of having it submitted to the electors, I would feel it my duty to bow to their will and vote for its submission. But I am safe in saying that I have not conversed with one prominent individual in my county who was not strongly in favor of the proposed union. I will admit that the political ties that bind men together are strong ties, and approach to a great extent to the feeling of friendship, and perhaps there is no one values them more than I do; but when I aided, at the meeting of the Liberal party, a year ago, in bringing about the present movement, I did so believing that it was for the best interests of the country, and if properly carried out many of us will live to see this country become one of the greatest, happiest and freest on earth, because it possesses all the resources and all the material for wealth and prosperity that is found in any country. Nature has bountifully given us all she could well give towards making us a great and prosperous people. (Hear, hear.) Honorable gentlemen must admit that it is time a change should be brought about by some means, for it was a most melancholy sight to see the two sides of this House so evenly balanced against each other as they were during the two last sessions, the members spending night after night in useless discussion on personal grounds, instead of promoting useful legislation. Mr. SPEAKER, I fear if this course were continued for any length of time it would lead to serious results. There are certain bounds and limits, both to individuals, communities and nations, beyond which they cannot go with safety. I believe we had al-