

Mr. Stewart Campbell's Speech.

Mr. S. CAMPBELL said:—In accordance with the intimation given by me on a previous day—on the first occasion when I had an opportunity of doing so, I now proceed to move an amendment to the last clause of the Address in answer to His Excellency's Speech, and I will at once read the paragraph which I propose to substitute.

We regret that we are unable to perceive any grounds whereon to reciprocate your Excellency's congratulation upon the assumed success of the Delegation, commissioned by your Excellency under the resolution of this House to confer with Her Majesty's Government on the subject of the Union of the Colonies.

On behalf of the free people of Nova Scotia we would respectfully submit that in relation to that question the present is in our opinion a most important crisis in the history of this Province, and imperatively demands the exercise of the wisest discretion in the administration of its public affairs. Thus firmly impressed, we deem it to be our duty to convey to your Excellency our solemn protest against the action of the Delegates referred to, and most distinctly to claim and demand, on behalf of Nova Scotia, that no such measure as that proposed should have any operation in this Province until it has been deliberately reviewed by its Legislature, and sanctioned by the people at the polls.

Mr. Speaker, it is with no ordinary feelings that I view my position in regard to the topic of to-day. Gladly would I exchange the prominence in which I have been placed for one of less responsibility, one calling upon me in a more subordinate capacity to advocate the principles which I am prepared to avow. Truly would I have rejoiced if the occasion which has rendered my election necessary had not arisen—in short there had not been the necessity for presenting to the house the views of the people of this country as we conceive them to exist. But although on personal grounds I would have preferred the substitution of another state of things, yet being placed in such a position, and feeling called upon as I am for action in this matter, I do not hesitate to approach this subject as a member of a free legislature representing a free people. In answer to His Excellency's Speech, I feel that we are called on to say that we cannot reciprocate the language in which it is couched,—we cannot see that there is any ground for congratulating ourselves upon the success of a measure in which the people have no sympathy or concurrence. In ransacking the pages of history it is exceedingly difficult to find a case parallel to this. There are records of wrong, and spoliation, and injustice, in comparatively modern times, but we must go back, very far back indeed to find an instance such as that which calls for this amendment. It is true we need only go back a hundred years to find an unhappy state of things subsisting between the mother country and her colonies on this side of the water, and we know the results of the disaffection then induced by arbitrary enactments affecting the integrity of the Empire as it then existed, but I can find no record of rejoicing in such a condition as that in which we are placed until I extend my retrospect and revert to a history of a tyrant, Emperor though he may be called, who died while Rome was burning. In that case alone can I find a similarity of circumstances and a paralleled contempt and disregard of na-

tional feeling. The delegation referred to in the Address was constituted under a resolution of this Legislature at its last session, which reads as follows:

Resolved, That his Excellency the Lieut. Governor be authorized to appoint delegates to arrange with the Imperial Government a scheme of union which will effectually ensure just provision for the rights and interests of this Province; each Province to have an equal voice in such delegation, Upper and Lower Canada being for this purpose considered as separate Provinces.

That delegation was commissioned as I understand it to arrange with the Imperial Government a scheme of union, but was it even contemplated by the people or the house that that delegation was empowered to be parties to an Imperial act of Parliament, an arbitrary act? I am convinced that no such idea could have entered into the minds of gentlemen around these benches. Did we, the Parliament of Nova Scotia entrusted with and empowered to decide on the weal or woe of our country, and charged with the protection of the interests of the people, part with a right so deeply affecting their welfare as this Union will? No, sir, I conceive then that this delegation has exceeded its authority, and that the commission under which they probably acted was not authorised by this resolution. We had delegates in connection with this subject on a previous occasion, and the resolution under which they were appointed was similar in its terms to this, but was it supposed that the delegates sent to Charlottetown and Quebec were empowered to do anything but prepare a scheme to be submitted for the ratification of this house? Not by any means, and therefore when these gentlemen went across the water and became parties to an imperial act, when they were engaged in the lobby of the British Parliament promoting that act, they exceeded the authority conferred upon them by this house and by their commission. In that view I think that the action of the delegation is such as the house and the people should not sustain. This is a matter which should have been brought back here and subjected to the consideration of the legislature. But they have consummated the act as far as it was in their power to do so, and under what circumstances have their proceedings transpired? It is well known that the people of this country in every section petitioned by thousands praying that the scheme should not receive any consummation at the hands of the Imperial Government until it had been submitted to them at the polls, but how have these petitions been treated? Have we heard that they have even been read or even presented, in order that the wishes of the country should be known? Then this bill, framed by the delegates, under an authority which they assumed but had not, was introduced into the House of Lords, a body composed, I think, of between 300 and 400 members, and how was it there received when presented for consideration? Of the hundreds of members, there could not be found one to witness its formal presentation one round dozen, and that important bill, touching the rights, the property and persons of our people for all time to come, was not even read. It was read by its title only, and the important details it embodied never