

## SPEECH OF MR. COFFIN.

Mr. COFFIN. — I regret that I am obliged to address the House at this late hour of the night; but as we are denied the privilege of another day's debate, and as the death-knell of my country is sounding, I do not wish to give a silent vote. The subject before the House is one of two great magnitude to be passed over lightly; it is a question of greater magnitude than any that has hitherto been before the Legislature. It is one calculated to sweep away our constitution, the dearest rights of Nova-Scotians as free men; it is one, sir, calculated to raise the ire of every one of Nova Scotia's sons; it is one that cannot be passed without ignoring the rights of the electors of Nova Scotia. Sir, I regret exceedingly that a resolution was passed in this House in 1864, authorizing a delegation to consult as to the propriety of a union of the Maritime Provinces, for out of that has grown the delegation to Quebec, and there with closed doors a consultation was held which ended in bartering away this fine Province, the people, and the constitution, to Canadian rule. There we have been sold, there we have been valued, there the rights dear to us of governing ourselves, and of being in ourselves a free, independent and contented people, were given up; and when it is known through the length and breadth of the land that this resolution has been passed, then it is that the indignation of the people will be aroused to an extent perhaps that will be calculated to weaken the strong feelings of attachment to their rulers that had hitherto existed. If this question had been approached in a way that was fair and honorable by first submitting the whole question to the country at the polls, and if it were then passed by the Legislature there would not have been the cause of complaint which at present exists. This is indeed a most dangerous step which is about to be taken; we have a thinking and intelligent people in Nova Scotia—a people that will not be likely to tolerate having their constitution bartered away without their consent, and without having those privileges which responsible government was intended to secure to them. I do not believe that the Imperial Parliament will ratify this scheme, if they are made properly acquainted with the whole transaction and with the facts which bear upon the case. Loyalty to the Crown has been spoken of. Sir, we pretend to foster that feeling, whilst at the same time a few men who now govern the country—who are expected to govern the people according to their well understood wishes, and who obtained place and power at the polls in 1863 under the cry of retrenchment, but who have so managed the public affairs as to gain for themselves, as they well know, the withering rebuke of seven-eighths of the people, to cap the climax—without submitting the measure to the people—they urge us to pass a resolution to deprive our beloved country of its Constitution. Sir, I would ask can language be employed sufficiently strong to convey the disapproval of this act? I have heard strong language made use of here at times; I heard only the other day the Prov. Secretary make use of the word "traitor" to another hon gentleman across the floor of this house. Sir, I will not make use of that term, but I am at a loss for

language sufficiently strong and severe without doing so. What can be said of the men who, in the face of the fact of nine-tenths of the people of this Province being decidedly adverse to the passage of this resolution, propose to sweep away our constitution and make us subservient to the rule of Canadian Statesmen, in whose wisdom for governing a country we have but little faith, and from whom we are severed for six months of the year as to any mode of travelling over British territory by land, and entirely shut out by sea, and for the other six months we have very indifferent communication. It is said we are to have the Intercolonial Railway. This may be the case in the course of time, but the Intercolonial Railway should have preceded the Union of the Colonies. Why, sir, suppose a war was to break out between the United States and G. Britain, and the General Parliament had to be convened in winter months at Ottawa, how are we to reach there? Would it be over the ice, or on snow shoes ever land? Sir, had the public men of Canada been true to their interests, and the Colonial Secretaries of England been true to their engagements, we should long before this have had the railway built.—Can Canadians or Nova Scotians expect to build that railway on terms made easier as to finances than by the offers made by the British Government in 1862, to which the Canadians refused to accede? If they had acceded, the road might now have been built. The reason for Canada not accepting the offers then made may have been that they expected at some future day to use that work as a lever by which to force the Maritime Provinces into a union; and, sir, may we not well believe that they have accomplished the end in view? They must be famous for their powers of persuasion or they never could have buttered the delegation from this Province so smoothly as to get them to sign that document at Quebec. I believe it was at the last great dinner at Montreal that the iniquitous scheme was completed—a scheme so unjust to the people of this Province—a scheme by which the country and the Constitution they loved so well have been most grossly bartered away—and a scheme that the government of this Province will not, nay, sir, dare not, submit to the people at the polls. But it may be said by the friends of this measure that the scheme is to be altered, they having met the propositions of the hon gentleman from Richmond, but does not every one know that this is a farce, a delusion? Does not every one know that that proposition was known to the government long before it was announced on the floors of this house? The resolution is that the British Government shall arbitrate between contending parties, when the British Government have already declared in favor of the Quebec scheme, and, I believe, without looking minutely into the matter; but having passed on the Quebec scheme already, they will not retract;—and the government of Nova Scotia having already pledged themselves over and over again to the Quebec scheme, does any one suppose that they will compromise themselves by going as a delegation to England to persuade the British Government to make alterations which they well know Canada will not agree to? They would be fools if they did, seeing the way in which this resolution passed this house,