

rious ministries which had, one after another, come into power—that position, I say, necessitated a change which might put an end to such a deplorable state of affairs. Our situation was like that of the Roman Empire when near its fall. The union, as the Hon. Attorney General for Lower Canada (Hon. Mr. CARTIER) so well said, had lasted its time; it now became necessary to try something else. It was necessary that the nation which, of all the different races which inhabit the British Provinces in North America, is foremost in duration, energy and prosperity, should take the lead and initiate that measure which was to deliver the country from its difficulties. Well, Mr. SPEAKER, the most natural remedy which occurred was the scheme for the Confederation of the English Provinces on this continent, and as the opponents of the measure—men who have thrown all their powers, courage and perseverance into their opposition—have never moved any other, it seemed to be the only one which found acceptance. This scheme has not had the effect of producing fear in my mind, as it has in several members who have spoken before me. After careful examination, I have arrived at the conclusion that it is practicable, and that it ought to be adopted. I am well aware that it is not perfect, for there is nothing perfect in this nether world. It was not possible to take every advantage for Lower Canada, and to leave nothing for Upper Canada and the Maritime Provinces. Some concessions were necessary to be made in common justice, as we were obtaining great material advantages, together with the preservation and protection of our dearest interests. In short, it was necessary that we and they should make what is generally termed a compromise, and that compromise was such as to be in our favor in every respect. I do not profess to be a religious man, but I may venture to assert, without transgressing the bounds of modesty, that I love and revere my religion as much as any other man in this House. Before, therefore, I could form any decided opinion on the question that is now before the House, and give my vote in favor of it, I did not omit to consult our priests. I have always blamed the conduct of those priests who interfered in elections and matters of policy, acting the parts of canvassers and ultra-partisans, instead of endeavoring from the pulpit—the very abode of truth—to calm the animosities of parties, and to aid the people in making an honest, free, independent and judicious choice, and turning in a manner the pulpit of truth

itself into a political tribune, from which they promulgate principles which might be termed seditious. Such conduct I have always condemned. I love to find in the members of the clergy those virtues which ought to characterise them; and as now the business in hand is not the election of a member of Parliament, but a complete change in the Constitution of the country, it is my opinion that they ought to be considered citizens, and to enjoy as fully and completely as any other class the endowments and privileges which belong to others, and that, as others have, so should they have a right to examine the new Constitution which we are to receive, and to give their opinion on its merits and imperfections. Relying on the judgment and the intelligence of certain of this order, I thought it right to consult them. I had recourse to two members of the clergy of the district of Three Rivers—men of great learning, and eminently qualified to give an opinion on the scheme of Confederation—men who were perfectly free from the spirit of party, without political bias or personal ambition to be gratified in preference to the interests of the country, and whose opinions were entitled to respect as being the fruit of a life of study and labor constantly employed to increase the happiness and prosperity of their fellow-citizens and their country, and to protect our religious institutions. (Hear, hear.) I have no intention to name those two venerable men, who are known throughout the country as two of the most distinguished members of our Canadian clergy and most eminent citizens. Well, Mr. SPEAKER, I consulted those two men, and both agreed in making answer that they were favorable to the project of Confederation of the British North American Provinces on this continent. Resting, then, on my own convictions that Confederation is the best means we have at hand of escaping from the present difficult position of the country, and on the authority of members of the clergy—an authority which I take pleasure in mentioning, because the opponents of the Ministerial plan have affected to believe that all the clergy in the country are opposed to the measure—thus supported, Mr. SPEAKER, I hold it to be my duty, and I do not hesitate to give my vote in favor of the principle and the project of Confederation. Certain apprehensions have arisen in the public mind relative to the project in question; these fears, I need not say, have been excited by the opponents of the measure, who make themselves hoarse with crying that French-Canadian