

union, I do not hesitate to say that I will dedicate the remaining years of my life, be they many or few, to endeavor to repeal a union so hateful and obnoxious. I am an Englishman in spirit, if not by birth; I love the institutions of England, but if I am deprived of them and of my liberties as a British subject,—then all I can say is, that by every constitutional means, I will endeavor to overthrow and destroy a union brought about by corrupt and arbitrary means.

Speech of Hon. Financial Secretary.

Hon. JAMES MACDONALD said:—It was not, my intention to address the House this evening but as no gentleman appears ready to speak just now I shall endeavor to compress the few observations I have to make in as brief a compass as possible. I did certainly expect, and the House had a right to expect, that when gentlemen claiming to possess the sympathy of a large number of the people challenged the action of an overwhelming majority of the representatives of the people assembled in their deliberative capacity, on a great and important constitutional question they would have been prepared to adduce some precedent and cite some authority in support of the course they have thought proper to pursue. Especially had we a right to expect this from a gentleman who is a leading member of the legal profession, who has sat in the highest position in this House, and who appears to occupy the position of leader of the Opposition on this great question. The hon. member for Guysboro', the mover of this resolution, has challenged the constitutionality of the action of this House in dealing with this question. That branch of the subject has been so fully and ably dealt with by the hon. Prov. Secretary, that it is unnecessary for me to refer to it at an length, but I must recall to the recollection of hon. gentlemen that, during the debate of last year on the Union question, I took the liberty of laying before the House and country certain authorities which, I claimed, proved conclusively the right of the Legislature to deliberate and finally decide upon this or any other measure which in their judgment affected the right or interests of the people. On that occasion I challenged the hon. member and those holding similar views, to bring forward a single authority from the whole constitutional history of England or of any other country enjoying British constitutions in favour of the proceeding which they wish to pursue. Now these gentlemen have had a whole year to search for these authorities—a whole year during which this question has been engaging the attention of the ablest minds of the Empire—but they have not been able this session any more than they were at the last, to do more than deal in the vaguest generalities and to substitute for argument and authority empty assertions and worthless declamation. It was not respectful on the part of the hon. member for Guysboro', to the members of this Legislature, it did not comport with his own character and self-respect that he should fail to bring forward a single authority

in support of his position, and that he should have felt himself justified in being content to give us only the opinion of a gentleman whom I am not disposed to deal harshly with—but still only the opinion of merely a colonial lawyer against the opinions of the other lawyers in this House sustained and supported as those opinions are by the leading statesmen and lawyers of the whole Empire; that is to say, the opinion of Mr. Stewart Campbell against that of the ablest and best authorities in the Empire at large. That hon. member had the audacity, then, influenced by an arrogant opinion of his own standing in this country not only to oppose every authority which has been produced, but tells you, asks this House to believe that the leading minds of the Empire, the Peers and Commons of England—men who control the destinies of the greatest Empire in the world—who have passed triumphantly through the storms and passions of parties, and of popular excitement—men who at this moment when the country is violently agitated by a widespread movement for Reform, refuse to be actuated by impulse of mere party aims—that men like these are not entitled to the respect and confidence of the House and country on a question like this. Without condescending to produce one single sentence of law or authority, he asks the people of this province to take his unsupported word against the united opinion of the best minds of British America, and of the parent state besides.

I did expect that after the able and argumentative address of the Provincial Secretary we would have seen an effort made by gentlemen opposite to combat the position he has taken, but it is quite evident from the remarks of the hon. member who last addressed you that there is no wish on the part of members opposite to convince the members of this House. Their game is to excite, if it be possible, a feeling of dread and dislike to this measure outside these walls. The amendment of the hon. and learned member for Guysboro' raised only the constitutional feature of this question, but I am relieved from the duty which I felt incumbent upon me to produce authority after authority, record after record, from English constitutional history down to the present time; for the hon. member for East Halifax says boldly, "I admit the authority of Parliament; it has the right and the power to deal with this question; I do not deny that the position we took last winter and that taken by this amendment is entirely unconstitutional; but all I ask you is, whether the exercise of that power at the present time is judicious or not." Who is right? Which is the best authority? I leave the hon. member for Guysboro' and the hon. member for Halifax to answer the question, and reconcile the respective positions they have taken.

We have to decide whether it is at the present moment judicious—whether under circumstances which are transpiring in British America—whether in view of the position of these colonies towards the mother country and the great power on our border—we should accept the terms of