

possible—for I do not feel able to address you at any length—to speak in that moderate tone in which I conceive the question before us ought to be dealt with. In the discussion of so important a question as the change of the Constitution of the country, the laying aside of the old Constitution and the adoption of a new and very different one, we all ought to endeavor to find common ground of agreement. It is important that no party, or at least no sectional interest among political parties, should betray itself in the discussion of so important a subject. I shall now endeavor to take a brief view of the scheme, as it is presented, and endeavor to give an exposition of the views which I entertain with regard to this matter. (Hear, hear.) It appears to me, in the first place, that the origin of this scheme was not what it ought to have been. It did not emanate from the people, but from the fact that certain political difficulties existed in Canada, in consequence of the political parties being so equally divided that it was found impracticable to get on with the government of this province. The scheme emanated from the Government of this country in consequence of those political difficulties, and had not its origin with any movement among the masses of the people. It is very well known that at the last general election, in 1863, this was not among the questions that were brought before the country. It was not one of those questions that the people were called upon to decide in returning members to represent them in the Legislature. It is very true that the scheme of a Federal union of all the provinces has been spoken of for a quarter of a century by eminent men of all shades of politics. We may refer to the convention that was held at Kingston, at which the British American League was formed. That convention was convened by the Conservative party of Upper Canada. Subsequently, the great meeting—if I may use that expression—that was convened in the city of Toronto, referred to the same question. But I go back and appeal to the fact that at the last general election, it was not one of those questions that were referred to the arbitrament of the people to decide by their votes as to the desirability of union. I think every honorable gentleman will agree with me that this was the fact. Now, honorable gentlemen, I desire to speak in a temperate tone and manner in regard to this scheme. I believe the gentlemen that now constitute the Government of Canada, as well as the gentlemen who constitute the dif-

ferent governments of the Lower Provinces, are all able men, and I believe they are all honest and practical men, and it was by and through the instrumentality of honorable gentlemen constituting the Government of Canada in connection with the governments of the Maritime Provinces that this scheme, if it had not its origin, at least was by them put before the people of this country in the shape in which it now presents itself in these resolutions. I therefore observe that this is a measure emanating from the minds of the foremost men in Canada, and probably the foremost men on the continent of America. Still, it is not a measure that has emanated from the people, and I would ask you all, honorable gentlemen, in reference to the change of a country's Constitution, if history does not bear me out in asserting that all such changes are preceded by a rising of the people in favor of the change. The people, feeling oppressed by the existing state of things, rise in their majesty and put an end to its continuance, and demand a new Constitution. But in regard to a change effected in the manner in which this is proposed, by the united wisdom of the several governments, without any convulsion, I hold that under those circumstances the people of the whole country to be affected by the change ought to have an opportunity of considering the great change. It is not sufficient in my mind that a few of the leading spirits of the land should be able to control and bring about so great a change without the initiatory steps being taken on the part of the people. Now, honorable gentlemen, I would refer to the representation in the first conference—the conference in which the initiatory steps were taken—at Charlottetown. All honorable gentlemen are aware that the governments of the several Maritime Provinces had decreed by resolutions passed during former sessions of their several parliaments, that they were to send delegates to meet at Charlottetown, for the purpose of uniting their several governments under one government; in other words, to consolidate their governments into what would be termed a legislative union. We could all understand from the position of those several local governments that it was a matter of very great importance that they should unite their governments under one to obviate the necessity of having different rates of duty; and in fact their interests were so blended that we can understand that union was of very great importance to them. The Government of Canada met the delegates at Charlottetown, and