

the Island to the other, that the members of the Government, with two exceptions, are hostile to the proposed Confederation. The Report of the resolutions of the Quebec Conference does not come before this House as a Government measure. Confederation is an open question, and in this discussion I recognize but two parties—the one composed of the four or five members who are favorable to Confederation, and the other consisting of the six and twenty members who I believe to be opposed to Confederation. Mr. Speaker, I am upon the discussion of the questions involved in the Report of the Quebec Conference, deeply sensible of their magnitude and importance, and of my utter incompetency to do them justice; but, Sir, in this House the number of those who advocate Confederation, which this Report contemplates, is so very small—consisting of some four or five only—that we cannot afford that even one should remain silent. In taking the lead in the discussion of this subject, I am encouraged by the consciousness that the gentlemen who will follow me, in support of these resolutions, are able than I am to do justice to the great question to which they relate. It is generally known, Sir, that the Quebec Conference had its origin in the resolutions which, last Session, were passed by the Legislatures of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, authorizing a convention of Delegates for the purpose of conferring upon the subject of a Legislative Union of these Provinces. When the resolution, assenting to the Convention, of which I have spoken, was before this House last Session, I declared myself in favor of the Legislative Union which it contemplated, and at the same time expressed regret that the Legislatures of the neighboring Provinces had not proposed the larger scheme of Union, which should include all the British possessions in North America. Of the thirty members of which this House is composed, but two declared themselves in favor of a Legislative Union of these three Maritime Provinces, although several non-members expressed themselves as not averse to a Federal Union of all the Provinces. In due time Delegates from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, assembled in Conference in this Building. The Government of Canada had sent to this Island a deputation composed of the leading statesmen of that Province. These gentlemen were admitted to the Conference shortly after its proceedings were opened, and at their instance the Conference postponed the further discussion of the question of the proposed Legislative Union, in order to allow the Canadian Government to submit a scheme for a general Confederation of the Provinces of British North America. After a tour through the Lower Provinces the Canadians returned to Quebec. With the sanction of the Crown, and at the request of His Lordship the Governor General, the Governments of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, sent Delegates to Quebec, for the purpose of discussing with the Government of Canada, the practicability of a Federal Union of the Provinces of British North America under the Crown of Great Britain. I have heard a great deal said against the Government of this Island for assenting to the request of the Governor General. I need not inform this House that the request of the Governor General; that Delegates should be sent to represent this Island at the proposed Conference, was one which the Government would not have been justified in refusing. Exception has also been taken to the constitution of the delegation. It was understood by the members of the respective Governments represented at Charlottetown, that the gentlemen who had composed that Conference should be members of the Conference to be held at Quebec. The Government of this Island considered it very desirable that at the Quebec Conference all political parties should be fairly and fully represented. I admit, Mr. Speaker, that at the time of the appointment of Delegates to proceed to Quebec, I was under the belief that should the Delegates appointed unanimously agree to recommend to the Legislature and people of this Island the adoption of the resolutions of the

Conference, such resolutions, being unanimously adopted, would be accepted, alike by the Legislature and the people. At the Charlottetown Conference this Island was represented by five Delegates. The party in opposition to the Government, in each branch of the Legislature, was represented by one member—by the Hon. Mr. Cole of the Assembly, and the Hon. Mr. Armand Robitaille of the Legislative Council. This Delegation, it was considered, did not sufficiently represent the Opposition in this House; therefore the Hon. Edward Whelan, whose abilities and long parliamentary experience render him eminently a representative man of his party, was requested to join the Delegation to Quebec. The present Solicitor-General was also requested to give us the aid of his knowledge and experience. Prince Edward Island, it will be seen, was fully represented at the Quebec Conference; and although the seven gentlemen who composed the Delegation declared, in Canada, the Report of the Conference such as they could recommend for the adoption of the Legislature and people of this Island, I regret to say, Sir, that very few, either in the Legislature or among the people, are at present disposed to adopt the resolutions of the Conference. The Conference assembled at Quebec, and the important subject, for the consideration of which the leading public men of five Provinces and Colonies had met together, was entered upon, in a spirit of patriotism, by gentlemen deeply impressed with the magnitude, and with the difficulties of the task which lay before them—the devising a constitution which should unite, under one general government, the Provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Colonies of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, in each of which is maintained a distinct and different tariff—a different currency—in short an entirely distinct government—and which, so combined in the aggregate a population approaching four millions. The Report now under consideration is the result of their labors. In all their deliberations, the Delegates kept in mind that it was absolutely necessary that mutual concessions should be made. The many difficulties with which they had to contend, could only have been surmounted by mutual deference and concession. The resolutions passed by the Conference were not, in any particular, in accordance with the views of the Representatives of each Province and Colony. Taken together, they embodied a constitution which, as I considered, received the unanimous support of the members of the Conference. Gentlemen with whom I was associated in the Delegation representing this Island, have, I am aware, since their return to the Island, denounced that which in Canada they approved. It is not my intention, Mr. Speaker, on the present occasion to call in question the right of these gentlemen to change their views; nor shall I charge them with inconsistency. I do not feel myself at liberty to allude to the course pursued by hon. gentlemen at the Conference, nor to quote from their speeches delivered there. There is one very strong reason why the expressions of members, while at the Conference, should not be quoted. It is this. It was understood that the deliberations should be considered private. There is no record to which to appeal in the event of the correctness of statements attributed to hon. members being called in question. I shall endeavor to deal with the resolutions as reported from the Conference, and not with the suggestions or amendments of any hon. member made at the Conference previously to the passing of these resolutions. It has been objected that the deliberations of the Conference were conducted with closed doors. The reasons for such an arrangement are obvious. The admission of the public would, to some extent, have prevented that free and full discussion which was so desirable, while the daily publication of the expressions of members would have prevented unanimous conclusions. It has been urged against the Confederation of the Colonies, proposed in the Report of the Quebec Conference, that the scheme had its origin in the local difficulties of the Canadian Dominion. It is true that the sectional difficulties of Canada during the last year