

struggle undertaken in order to secure responsible government, which had, up to that time, been refused, and which was then accorded us as the reward of the struggle. At that period Lower Canada was united as one man; she had forwarded to England petitions, bearing 60,000 signatures, asking for responsible government. We then had in our ranks men who did not shrink from the struggle, men accustomed to resist oppression, men who had grown up in the midst of a strife with an arrogant minority, which sought to overrule the majority; and these were the great men who secured the triumph of our nationality, and upheld the rights of Lower Canada, by securing responsible government at the same time that the union was forced upon us. Let us now see the result of their labors. Is it true that we have progressed both socially and materially since that period? Any one who reflects on what Canada was in 1840, and what it is in 1865, cannot but admit that we have progressed in a degree almost unprecedented in the history of the prosperity of nations; that we have immensely extended our territory, by clearing away the forest; that our population has increased in a wonderful manner, that that population is prosperous and contented, and that we have progressed materially and socially in a manner heretofore unprecedented under the colonial system. In the social order, let us examine, first, our legislation and system in municipal matters. Can a more perfect system be found anywhere? Has not every locality all the powers necessary for effecting all improvements of real necessity? It is since the union that we have perfected this system, and that we have endowed our rural districts with the means of effecting all improvements they may desire, and particularly as regards road matters and the making of new roads, in order to facilitate the transport of farm produce to market. (Hear, hear.) But I need not dwell on the progress we have made and the reforms we have carried out, as regards legislation. That which had chiefly contributed, from the first establishment of English rule, to arrest our progress in this respect was the Legislative Council of the former Legislature, and that which existed from the union up to 1856. Since that period have we not obtained an elective Legislative Council, and must not our greatest reforms be considered the consequence? With the union and responsible government, did we not also secure the right

of being represented by French-Canadian fellow-countrymen in the Executive Council? And since then have we not enjoyed all the advantage of a system of government under which the people can, not only express their wants, but enforce their wishes? These are reforms of the highest importance, but we have obtained yet more. When, in 1840, the union of the Canadas took place, landed property in Lower Canada was subjected to the feudal system, which had been introduced with all its features derogatory to the dignity of man, with all its charges upon property, and all its vexations for the *censitaire*. Under that system no property whatever could change hands without being submitted to a heavy charge in the form of *lods et ventes* for the benefit of the seignior, and to *cens et rentes* which considerably reduced its value. With the political rights conferred on us by the union, the seigniorial system of necessity disappeared, giving us property in freehold, the same as in the neighbouring States and in all civilized nations. It is also since the union that we have consolidated our laws; that we have created a system of public instruction which imparts the blessings of education to the most remote parts of the province. At the present moment we have a school system which does honor to the country, and the intelligent, however poor they may be, can, almost without charge, acquire an education. Now, each village, each concession has its school, and the child of the backwoodsman dwelling in the midst of the forest, can there obtain a degree of elementary instruction sufficient to enable him to enter upon a career of honor and fortune, should his talents, his industry and his energy fit him for playing a part in politics, in the sciences, in the arts or in the ranks of the clergy of his country. It is a remarkable fact, Mr. SPEAKER, and one which I deem it right to mention, that the majority of the notable men who have attained seats on the judicial bench, in the Ministry and even in the Episcopal chair, came forth from our humble country homes, and qualified themselves in our educational institutions, where instruction is afforded all but gratuitously, by dint of talent, perseverance, study and industry. It was the pressure of want in the family homestead that in many cases created in the breasts of our most eminent public men, the eager desire of attaining a high position by means of study and labor. Since the union our system and means of public