[illegible] that proposed Union on the different platforms of parties. There is no [illegible] that Sir Frederick Gordon may well celebrate us to the platform of the Union; and if I supposed that the Government of this Island would, [illegible] without the opinion of the people having been taken upon it, I would vote for the resolution before us. This question involves our political existence, and the principles for which the oppressed nationalities of the world have been and are struggling. There is no necessity for haste; if we find that Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, decline to enter into the compact there is an end of it. If they then consent to it, and we be forced to deal in our lot with them, we shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that we have done our duty to our country.

Hon Mr COLES.—If we are to wait for the action of the other Colonies, and to follow in their footsteps, we may as well them to send to the Island copies of their proceedings and that we will adopt them. I repeat that this is a question on which the Government should declare their policy. In Canada and the other Colonies it is true that parties formerly opposed to each other have united on this matter, but it should be remembered, on the other hand, that there has been a combination of men who formerly took different sides in politics, in opposition to the scheme. In Canada Mr. Dorion is not found lying down beside his former colleague, Mr Brown. When I say that this is a political question, I do not mean to assert that the same party lines which formerly existed must necessarily remain. I object to the Government expressing themselves as opposed to a question of such importance as this, and taking into their councils a gentleman who has expressed himself most warmly in favor of it.

Mr BRECKEN.—I did not say that I would consent to any course which Nova Scotia or New Brunswick might adopt. I stated that it would be advisable to wait until we had ascertained their views; and surely the hon member must admit that if those Provinces decline to unite their destinies with those of Canada, there is as much probability that the latter will force Prince Edward Island into a union with her. I agree with the hon member that new political associations have arisen in the other Colonies on this question. In Canada, Mr Brown sits beside his old opponents, Messrs Cartier and McGee, and a similar fusion of parties may take place here. Public men have and do change their views on particular questions, and it may be that the hon member himself shall, at some future day, find himself the leader of a Union party; and, Sir, such a position would imply no discredit to him, if additional information should dawn upon his mind.

Hon Mr COLES.—With reference to the appointment of the Solicitor General, my objection is, that if that gentleman be returned to this House, and the question of Confederation be brought up during the present Session, he must either vote on it, against his own convictions, or against the Government of which he is a member and paid official.

Mr BRECKEN.—I repeat that if elected on his public assertion to his constituents that however strong may be the opinions he entertains on the subject of the contemplated Union, it is not the intention of the Government which he has joined to force it upon the people before they shall have had the opportunity of signifying their wishes on the subject, he can, without the slightest imputation of inconsistency, sit in the Executive Council and this House as Solicitor General of his party; and it is somewhat inconsistent with the character of a great liberal that he should advocate the principle of a representative of the people forcing his opinions upon those who differed from them.

Hon Col SECRETARY.—Mr Chairman, in the absence of all official information, this discussion is premature and irrelevant. When the proper time shall have arrived I will be prepared to discuss fully the appointment to which reference has been made, and the subject of the Conference at Quebec. The paragraph before us merely states that we will give due consideration to the correspondence when it shall have been submitted to us. When that shall have been done, we can, with propriety, discuss the matter, and not sooner.

Mr SINCLAIR.—Mr Chairman, I am of the opinion of those who believe that the interests of the people are not so safe in the keeping of a Government in favor of Union as if one opposed to it. When the hon member for Charlottetown, Mr Brecken, says that this question involves our very political existence, he necessarily implies that it is pre-eminently a question of a political nature—of such nature that the Government should express their opinion on [illegible] and not [illegible] the hide-and-seek [illegible] the matter. The people are fit to be entrusted with the [illegible] in which the application to their expressed opinions [illegible] a question of such momentous importance to this people [illegible] the right to the fullest information; and, Sir, as the opinions [illegible] on this people, I feel myself in a position very different [illegible] that which I occupied last Session when the question of Union was before us. We now find that instead of the cautious manner in which this matter was treated by the Government last year, that they consider themselves justified in acting without reference to the wishes or opinions of the House. The hon leader of the Government ridicules the idea of consulting the popular branch of the legislature on the propriety or expediency of the second conference, while we all know that the opinion of the House last year was almost unanimous in opposition to the Union of even the Maritime Provinces. It is in the recollection of hon members that the House dealt with the subject very cautiously; they were particular in limiting the authority of the delegates who might be appointed by the Government to the mere preparation and report of the preliminary details of such scheme as might meet the approval of the assembled representatives of the Lower Provinces. The following is the resolution submitted last year by the then leader of the Government:—

"*Resolved*, That His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor be authorized to appoint Delegates (not to exceed five) to confer with Delegates who may be appointed by the governments of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick for the purpose of discussing the expediency of a Union of the three provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P. E. Island under one government and Legislature—the Report of said Delegates to be laid before the Legislature of this Colony, before any further action shall be taken in regard to the proposed question."

And in the speech which that hon member made on that occasion he said:—

"Now, Sir, I cannot avoid expressing my opinion that our neighbors are proceeding too hastily in this matter. I think the first point to consider is, Shall there be 'a preliminary plan?' Is it advisable to have a Union at all? In the resolution which I have submitted it is proposed to appoint Delegates, simply for the purpose of discussing the expediency of a union of the three Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P. E. Island, under one Government and Legislature. This is as far as I deem to be prudent for us to proceed at present."

Now, Sir, I assert that in the action they have taken the Government have exceeded their authority. They appointed another delegation having a very different object, and that delegation instead of merely agreeing to and reporting upon a preliminary plan, have subscribed and adopted the details of a constitution so definite as to have been viewed in the light of a treaty entered into by parties invested with full powers to bind the countries they represented; and we may be sure that we shall be reproached as having been guilty of a breach of faith, if we do not ratify their proceedings. Our legislative constitution will be a mere farce if the Government are allowed to do as they please irrespectively of the formally expressed opinions of this House. If it is the privilege and the duty of this House to criticise and pass judgment upon the acts of the Government, what is the use of calling us together after our rights have been taken from us by the Government! The hon member for Belfast (Hon Col Gray) took credit to himself for the composition of the Island delegation—that it embraced men of opposite opinions, gentlemen selected from each of the political parties in the legislature. That affords to my mind a very strong argument in favor of cautious deliberation, for there is always cause to fear that the prospect of honors and emoluments may be held out to induce unanimity of sentiment between parties who were previously opposed to each other.

Hon Mr LONGWORTH.—Mr Chairman, if the hon member is of opinion that all the leading men of British North America have united to sell the rights of the people, he should shew that the arguments they have made use of are unsound.