

HON. MR. HOLTON—With some qualifications.

HON. ATTY. GEN. MACDONALD—No; we told the House that we had the previous sanction of Her Majesty and of Her Majesty's representative to our meeting. The Conference met and sat under this authority, and we worked out a scheme for the Constitution of the provinces. That scheme may be a good or it may be a bad one; but whether it be good or bad, we have a right to ask this House to approve or disapprove of it, to accept or reject it. We had the sanction of Her Majesty and the Imperial Government to our meeting—because this House knows that the union of these colonies is a matter of great Imperial as well as of great local interest—and under that sanction we have worked out a Constitution and made a bargain with the other provinces. We have pledged ourselves as a Government to come down to the Canadian Parliament and say—"Here is a Constitution which we have agreed upon for the future government of these provinces. We have agreed to submit it to this House, just as the governments of the other provinces have agreed to submit it to their respective legislatures. We have a right to ask the members of this House whether in their judgment it is a scheme that, with all the faults and imperfections it may have, ought to be entered into by the Parliament of this country. We exercise this right, and ask you to declare by your votes, yes or no, whether we were right in framing this measure, and whether it is such an one as ought to be adopted by this House." (Hear, hear.) This, Mr. SPEAKER, is the position of the Government; and what though amendments should be carried—what though the amendment of which the honorable member for North Ontario has given notice should succeed, and the House should declare in favor of a Legislative instead of a Federal union (supposing the honorable gentleman did present and carry such a motion)—what good could it possibly do? The contract that we entered into with the other provinces would be broken; this Legislature would be violating the solemn engagement under which we are to the other colonies, and we would have a Constitution drawn up which none of the other provinces would adopt. We know that they would reject it—we know that Lower Canada would go as one man against it. (Hear, hear.)

HON. MR. HOLTON—Well, the other provinces go against this.

HON. ATTY. GEN. MACDONALD—At

all events the governments of the other provinces will submit the question to their legislatures and take their opinion upon it, and we have a right to ask this House—"Do you or do you not approve of it? If you disapprove of the scheme altogether because of its general principles, why vote it out. If you think that it ought to be a Legislative and not a Federal union, why vote it out. If you think it wrong to create a life peerage instead of an elective Legislative Council, why vote it out. Vote it out for any or all of these reasons if you like; but give us at once an honest, candid and fair vote one way or the other, and let the sister colonies know without delay whether you approve of the arrangement or not." (Hear, hear.) And, sir, amendments are a mere matter of folly and absurdity. (Hear, hear, and ironical cheers from the Opposition.) Honorable gentlemen opposite cry "Hear, hear." I do not of course speak of the merits of any proposition in amendment for a legislative union, or an elective Legislative Council, or for any other change in the provisions of the scheme; but I state this in all earnestness, that for all practical purposes the carrying of any amendment to this scheme is merely to lose the only chance of union we can ever hope to have with the Lower Provinces for the sake of some fancied superior Constitution which we cannot get any of the colonies to agree to. (Hear, hear.) All we ask this House to do is what the other branch of the Legislature has already candidly done, to discuss the matter fairly and honestly upon its merits, and then to come to a vote upon it. Those who think the Constitution likely to place the country in a worse position than it now occupies, will vote against it. Those who think, on the other hand, that it is an approximation at any rate to what is right, that it will bring the colonies together into closer communication, that it will form the basis of a powerful and enduring alliance with England, will vote for it with all its faults. (Hear, hear.) Now, as to the consequences of this motion which I have proposed, this House ought to know that not a single speech can be cut off or shorn of its dimensions by it, and that every honorable gentleman can discuss the question of Confederation, giving, as fully as he desires, the reasons why he will vote for or against the scheme proposed. All the motion will do, all the Government wish to do, is to keep the question before the House; and the honorable member for North Ontario can speak as well to it as if he had