

tion by water, and, like vivifying arteries, bear on their bosom to the ocean and the markets of the world the heavy produce of the western plains, the lofty pines of our forests, our ores of gold and copper, our furs collected in our hunting grounds, and the produce of our fisheries in the gulf. In this vast field of productiveness, where all the materials of immense wealth exist, we need a moving power, and the inexhaustible coal fields of Nova Scotia are at hand to furnish it. British North America, therefore, looms in the future with gigantic proportions, and it depends only on ourselves to decide whether the French element shall have a large share of the power which is to grow up within its limits. With energy and union, we shall keep the ground we have gained in a struggle of a hundred years. The past is a warranty of success in the future. Yet must we not hurry matters, nor overrun the natural progress of events. While we are still too few to take the offensive, our policy should be one of resistance. Accordingly, before pledging myself to the support of Confederation, which is a total change of the basis of our present Constitution, I would be perfectly sure that we shall not lose an inch of ground. More than this; I would permit no change to be made in our present Constitution, except in as far as it would ensure a larger measure of prosperity for our country, more powerful protection for our institutions, and the absolute inviolability of our rights. For I have not deviated in the smallest degree from the terms of my address to the electors of Richelieu, when I had the honor to solicit their votes as their representative in the Legislative Assembly. In that address, I declared myself opposed to any concession whatever to Upper Canada. Accordingly, if it should appear that the scheme of Confederation, which is to be laid before the Provincial Parliament in its next session, would assure to French-Canadians greater advantages than they enjoy under the present Constitution, I should, as a thing of course, be in favor of Confederation. But if it should be otherwise; if, in however small a degree, Confederation should appear to be a concession to Upper Canada, to the detriment of our institutions, our language or our laws, I shall to the utmost extent of my power oppose any change whatever in the present Constitution. Of course I am not one of those who would bound our political horizon and place limits to our greatness as a people; on the contrary, nothing would render me happier than the creation of a vast political organization, spread over an immense territory. The heart-burnings between localities and individuals would thenceforward cease and die out from mere insignificance, as compared with the great interests which would be confided to the watchful guardianship of our statesmen, and become the subject of their deliberations in the councils of the nation. Then the laudable ambition of achieving a great name in a great country would produce a race of great men, of whom we might be justly proud. But if this glorious future is to be purchased only at the price of our absorption, of our language, and all that is dear to

us as Frenchmen, I for one could not hesitate between what we may hope for while still remaining what we are, and the bastardizing of our race paid as the price of advantages to come. To sum up all, therefore, I declare for the Constitution such as it is, which, so far, has yielded us a greater amount of advantage than all the proposed changes would; and such, I venture to say, is the opinion of the majority of our Legislative Assembly. But if the projected scheme secures to us in the convention all the privileges which the French-Canadians now enjoy in the present Parliament, and if, in the whole and in every part, it secures to us greater advantages than those which are guaranteed to us by the Constitution, I shall prefer Confederation to all other changes.

I am bound to declare that this way of looking at the question, in the month of August last, has undergone no change in my mind, since I heard the explanations given by the members of the Administration. The skill which they have evinced certainly does them great honor, but neither the arguments of Ministers, nor those of the members of the House who support the scheme, have convinced me; and I rely on being able to show in my remarks what are the grounds of my opposition, and to justify, according to my way of looking at it, the responsibility which I undertake in opposing a project which has found such powerful supporters in this House. I trust I shall be able to show, first, the inexpediency of a constitutional change; second, the hostile object of Confederation; third, the disastrous consequences of the adoption of the project of Confederation. The inexpediency of a constitutional change must be perfectly evident to any one who considers for a moment the present prosperity of Canada, and who takes the trouble to examine the progress made by United Canada since 1840. The Hon. Attorney General East says that "the union has done its work." But is that quite certain? When we compare the past with the present, have we not reason to be proud of our growth since 1840, and of the fact that within the past twenty-five years, our progress, both social and material, has kept pace with that of the first nations in the world? During the past twenty-five years we have progressed politically in a manner unprecedented in colonial history; and Canada has furnished a magnificent instance of the good result of responsible government in an English colony, notwithstanding diversity of races and religions. In 1840, we had just terminated a glorious struggle, during which, unfortunately, many lives had been lost—