

my view of the subject, and it has also been ably and well laid down by the hon. leader of the Government, that the people ought to be consulted before a decision should be given in favor of the Union scheme. We have, now, however, as a House, no date to work upon, and therefore I repeat that it would be premature at present to enter upon a discussion of the subject, or come to a resolution bearing upon it.

Hon. Mr. COLES.—This is the very point at which I am alluding, namely, to draw out an expression of opinion from the Government. Should a dissolution of the House take place, how are the people to know what is submitted to them unless the Government say yes or nay. If I only knew their policy perhaps I would give them my support. It is evading the question to say that we are not informed on the subject, for almost every child between Ottawa and Charlottetown knows all about it—even to nice calculations on the cost of the Intercolonial Railway. The hon. member who last spoke, has, I understand, declared his views on the Union scheme at a public meeting; and after expressing himself as decidedly opposed to it, I am astonished that he, as a member of the Government, should give his sanction to the appointment of a gentleman to be one of his colleagues, who has announced himself to be a "red-hot Unionist." I contend that it was the duty of the Government to declare their principles, and then appeal to the people at once, and not to wait until the House was in Session some time before they agreed upon their policy—then perhaps only to put off the question. In Canada they deemed the matter of such importance as to grapple with it at the very opening of the Session. If we should delay giving a decision upon the question here until the House dies out, it will not be treating the Canadians fairly, who are desirous to have the measure carried immediately into effect. It was the duty of the Government, instead of acting as they have done, to have aimed at leading public opinion, and then taken the case to the polls. It is a very easy course for a Government to pursue, merely to slip along without advancing their views on questions of the greatest importance to the country. There is another subject occupying a share of public attention—a Union of a different description to that under consideration, which has been passed over in silence in His Excellency's speech. I allude to the Tenants' Union, and I am partly disposed to censure the Government for not declaring their sentiments in reference to this organization, as its principles may have to be tested at the next general election. But I will not enter into that subject now. The Government of New Brunswick have taken decided action on the question of Union; Hon. Mr. Tilley has declared himself in its favor and appealed to the people. If Confederation be rejected in that Province at the polls, will he retain office? No, Mr. Chairman, I believe he has too much principle to attempt anything so unconstitutional. Allusion has also been made to Nova Scotia; but from what I know of the gentleman who is leader of the Government there, I think it is not at all probable that he will shirk the question. It will come up in the Legislature, and if he is unable to carry it I believe he will appeal to the people. Several members of the Government of this Island have expressed sentiments at public meetings adverse to the proposed Union, but as the Hon. Col. Secretary and the Hon. Solicitor General are in favor of the measure, I suppose their colleagues have refrained from expressing an opinion in the Address lest these gentlemen should be offended. But they are not so careful about wounding the feelings of some of their friends. The Hon. Attorney General has been wedged out of the Executive Council on a difference connected with this question, and an effort made, at his expense, to smooth down matters for the return of the late leader of the Government to his former position.

Hon. Col. GRAY.—Mr. Chairman, I am of opinion that the conclusion of the hon. member's remarks might have been spared. I would have preferred to have taken no part in this discussion, but when referred to and misrepresented, I cannot be silent. Perhaps the hon. member may not be acquainted with the merits of the case to which he has alluded. Let me, then, state that the difference between an hon. gentleman, not a member of this House, and myself, was unconnected with the question of a Union of the Colonies. It was quite a different matter altogether. If the hon. member who has introduced this unpleasant subject would refer to the files of some of the public journals, he would find the reasons which I assigned for resigning my position as president of the Executive Council and as a member thereof. The case had nothing to do with a Union of the Colonies. It might have occurred in any other circumstances. It affected myself personally, and also the interests and honor

of the country apart from the question of Union. The hon. leader of the Opposition has referred to two points which though at first discovered he has since connected—the subject of a Union of the Colonies and a Government question respecting an appointment to office. I am at a loss to understand how the hon. member for East Point intends to propound his views on the subject; perhaps he will present his objections to the Address in a more connected form. Surely hon. members cannot have so soon forgotten that the Government appointed delegates, according to the resolution of this House last session, to confer with other delegates, on the subject of a Union of the Maritime Provinces; and also at a later date on the invitation of His Lordship the Governor General, that delegates were appointed to consider the broader question of a Union of the whole of the Provinces. This is a matter calculated to effect the interests and welfare of every subject in British America irrespective of party, race or faith; and consequently to divest it as much as possible from a party question, three members of the Government, three members of the Opposition, and one independent member of this House, were appointed to proceed to Quebec as delegates. This delegation was nominated on precisely the same grounds as the first was appointed. When the request came from Canada for this Colony to send delegates to confer on the question of a Union of the whole of the Provinces, surely it was not necessary to call the Legislature together to consider the propriety of acceding to the request. If this were the case of what use would the Executive be? It would, indeed, be a do-nothing Government. There was no occasion to seek new powers from the Legislature; the two delegations were for precisely the same purpose, only the latter was to consider the subject on a grander scale. The one scheme was for uniting Provinces comparatively unimportant; the other was for consolidating the same Provinces into a confederation which would form a state as large as the entire Continent of Europe. If I had thought that this subject was to have been made a Government question, had I so much love, politically speaking, for the hon. leader of the Opposition, or for the hon. gentleman on his right, the member for St. Peter's—as well as another hon. gentleman from the other end of the building who has generally been opposed to my views—that I should have appointed them on this delegation? My friendship for them on political grounds was not so great that I would have urged their appointment had I thought that the subject which the delegation met to consider was to be a question on which an effort would be made to defeat the Government. I encountered no little opposition in procuring the appointment of my political opponents; but if there be any blame attaching to it, I assume it all. I believe, however, that there is not a member of this House who does not appreciate and approve of the motives which influenced the choice. But Sir, I have recently learned that there are three great commandments for politicians—of which I was entirely ignorant when I entered political life. The first of these is for the politician to take good care of himself and his pocket; the second is to crush his enemy; and the third is to attend to the good of the country. And, Sir, I fear that the third is sometimes wholly forgotten in the zeal to carry out the other two. (Applause.) Acting on these rules, therefore, it is fair game for the hon. leader of the Opposition to endeavor to trip up the Government on any pretence whatever. I think, however, it would have been more prudent in him to have deferred bringing up this question until it came before the House in due form. The delegates appointed were required to report to the Legislature, which I as their chairman am prepared to do; but at this stage of the proceedings, until this Report can be laid before the House, it is premature to discuss this subject. At Quebec I expressed the opinion that this was a question for the people to decide; when I returned here, however, I found the statement had gone forth—like many more which were untrue—that this question was to be carried without an appeal to the people. I immediately wrote a letter to the different newspapers in the Colony stating some of my views on the subject, and assuring the people that the measure could not be sanctioned without an appeal to them. The hon. member has referred to the course pursued by the Government of Nova Scotia on the question. They have adopted there the plan which I thought we ought to follow out in this Colony. I understand it is the intention of the Government of Nova Scotia to submit the Report of the delegates to the House of Assembly, and if but a majority of that body were in favour of the scheme, that then there would be an appeal to the people. I have not consulted with the members of our Government—nor could it be expected that I should—as to what