

Mr. WRIGHT. Mr. Speaker: It is with much pleasure that I second the proposition of the hon. member for Quebec East. That hon. gentleman has placed his case before the House in such a graceful and appropriate manner that little remains to be said concerning it. But I have been requested by a number of gentlemen, both inside and outside this House, to say a few words on this matter, which they conceive to be of importance to the inhabitants of this Dominion. It has been suggested that in the youth of this country, under the very spring-time of the life of the Canadian people, some attempt should be made to perpetuate the memory of an event which may be called the birthday of the Dominion. It has been suggested that a Canadian artist should be selected to preserve and embalm, in an historical picture, the very form and appearance of the men who, animated by a lofty patriotism and a far-seeing statesmanship, conceived and carried into execution the idea of building up, on the northern part of this continent, a great British power, which, while cherishing Canadian sentiment and aspirations, would preserve the laws, traditions, and institutions of the Empire, and be animated by an undying love for the old lands beyond the sea. The event which it is proposed to perpetuate is the meeting of that Quebec Conference, which was held on the 10th of October, 1864. On that occasion the foundation of the Dominion were broadly and deeply laid and cemented with the love, loyalty and affection of a gallant and generous people. We have the actors and the theatre on which was performed this great historical drama. We want to delineate and preserve them, so that they may be held in everlasting remembrance. Perhaps I may be permitted to give a brief historical *resumé* of the events which preceded this meeting. I entered political life in 1863, and I well remember the fierce political conflicts which were of almost daily occurrence. There were giants in those days, and the picked men of the Canadian people were selected to lead the assault and maintain the defence. Nearly every week witnessed a vote of want of confidence. So evenly were the great parties balanced, so skilled were the leaders in parliamentary tactics, that constitutional Government seemed almost impossible. You can imagine how gallant was the attack and how desperate the defence, when George Brown, Sandfield Macdonald, A. A. Dorion and Wm. McDougall, and many other gallant gentlemen and able statesmen, held the fort; while John A. Macdonald, G. E. Cartier, A. T. Galt and D'Arcy McGee led the stormers. In the main, the warfare was conducted on generous and chivalrous principles. It was at times like the contest between the French and English Guards at Fontenoy: "Messieurs of the French Guards will please fire first!" At other times, I am free to confess, a more irregular and guerilla system of warfare prevailed. But when the battle was over our bugles sang truce, and we smoked the pipe of peace and passed about the wine cups, as did the French and English soldiers at the battle of Busaco. This state of things could not last, and it became absolutely necessary that a change should take place. It was under these circumstances that the great coalition between the Liberal and Conservative parties took place. At this time the idea of a great Confederation of the Provinces of British North America loomed up as a possible solution of a very difficult problem. This idea originated with the statesmen of the Maritime Provinces, who held a meeting at Charlottetown for the purpose of forming a federation of the Provinces on the sea-board. The leading Liberal and Conservative Canadian statesmen attended this convention, and the result was the great meeting of Provincial delegates at Quebec, on the 10th

Mr. LAURIER.

of October, 1864. A writer of this period tells us that the place of meeting was one of historic interest—the time, the men, and the circumstances were peculiar. Beneath the shadow of Cape Diamond, on the ruins of the old Castle of St. Louis, with the broad St. Lawrence stretching away in front, the Plains of Abraham in sight, and the St. Charles winding its silvery way through, seems replete with the memory of Old France. It was at this grand old fortress that the toilers of the sea and the toilers of the land made their solemn compact—a compact which bound them to stand shoulder to shoulder, and hold this lone outpost of the Empire against all odds. It was on the ruins of the old Chateau of St. Louis that the Englishmen and Frenchmen struck their hands together, not in deadly, but in friendly rivalry, to decide the destinies and mould the future of the northern part of this continent. Ninety years before, when the first Congress of the thirteen States met at Philadelphia, it was in defiance of the authority and of the country from which their people sprung. Now, the delegates from the British North American Provinces met with the full sanction of their Sovereign and the Imperial Parliament. In their deliberations, and the forming of their Constitution, they would have the benefit of the experience of the working of that Constitution, which, under conditions somewhat similar to their own as to country, institutions and people, had carried the United States through half a century of triumphant progress. It would be for them to avoid those causes of dissension which had created the then existing troubles of the United States. This great scheme was at last fully realized; Nova Scotia and New Brunswick joined the Union, the Great Lone Land and British Columbia became parts of the Confederation, Prince Edward Island threw in her fortunes with the Dominion, and at last Newfoundland was the only colony without the pale. Lord Monck opened the first Dominion Parliament at Ottawa, November 8th, 1867. In his speech on the occasion His Lordship gave utterance to the following remarkable words: "I congratulate you on the legislative sanction which has been given by the Imperial Parliament to the Act of Union, under the provisions of which we are now assembled, and which has laid the foundation of a new nationality that, I trust and believe, will ere long extend its bounds from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean." Well, the prophecy of His Excellency has been realized; the Dominion of Canada extends from ocean to ocean. The Minister of Railways, in his speech the other night, assured us that at no distant day the railway system would unite with an iron band the Atlantic and the Pacific. Well, the New Jerusalem, the North-West, dawns upon our vision. If one side of the statements concerning that El-Dorado of the North-West be correct, we have in that country what Dr. Johnson said of Threal's Brewery: "The potentiality of wealth before the dreams of avarice." But we have also in the older Provinces, notably in the county which I have the honor to represent, agricultural, mineral, lumbering and other resources, which will compare favorably with those of any part of the Dominion. And I trust that while we will do all in our power to advance the interests of the younger members of our political family, we will not forget the older Provinces. Who can forget that first meeting of the Dominion Parliament? It was composed of the foremost men, the very flower of the Dominion. In the front rank, literally the head and front of the offending, stood the right hon. the leader of the Government, who then, as now, stood first in the Councils of his Sovereign, and foremost in the hearts of his countrymen. I am certain that we are all pleased to see that, after an arduous Session, he still maintains that singular

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