

SPEECH

ON THE

CONFEDERATION OF THE PROVINCES.

MR. DUNKIN said—Mr. SPEAKER, almost every one who has yet spoken in this debate has begun with some expression of his feeling of embarrassment. For my own part, I should be glad if I could begin in some other way, but I confess that I cannot. For I certainly never did rise to address this House, or any other public body, under a feeling of such oppressive embarrassment as I experience at this moment. It is impossible for me, occupying the position in which I now stand, not to feel that I am opposed to powerful odds, and that there is a sort of foregone conclusion, here, against the views I desire to impress upon the House. It is impossible for me not to feel that the considerations to which I have to ask the attention of the House, are so many and so complex, that no sort of justice can possibly be done them within the limits of my capacity to speak, or of yours to listen. The interests at stake, too, are so large—so much larger than ever were at stake in any question which has yet been brought under the notice of this House, and the difficulties arising out of the question are so formidable, owing in no small measure to what I must call the many reticences with which this scheme has been laid before us, and the ambiguities of expression which everywhere characterize it, as to tax seriously the courage of those who may attempt to discuss it. I feel, besides, that I am entirely cut off from that description of remark which most of all tends to make one's speech pleasant to listen to; for I cannot prophecy smooth things, or dilate on the marvels of progress to result from Confederation in the future. There is a character of hurry, too, impressed on the whole style of this debate; everybody feels so impatient, that one can scarcely hope to express his views fully, as he would wish and ought, on this vast scheme. I have even

the feeling that my capacity for exertion is not up to its ordinary standard. I address the House in a state of health that renders me less capable than usual of physical exertions. I must, therefore, beg honorable members to make allowance for these circumstances surrounding my position; believing me that what I wish to do is to present as briefly as I can, and as truthfully as I can, my own deep seated convictions on the question now before the House. (Hear, hear.) So strongly, Mr. SPEAKER, do I feel my inability to discuss this scheme as I could wish, that I almost must throw myself on the forbearance of Lon. members—that I hardly can help saying I should be in danger of shrinking from the duty of addressing you, but for the recollection that time and again, I have known, in cases of contest almost or quite as discouraging as this, that “the race has not been to the swift nor the battle to the strong”—that time and again I have known those who went into such contests with the best hopes of success, disappointed in their expectations. I do know, and I know that others know—I believe it to be the general conviction of those whom I address to-night, as regards this question, that whatever of popular feeling there may seem to be in favor of the views I have to combat, is anything but the deliberate result of a well-considered examination of the whole subject—is a feeling of most sudden growth, and of most passing character. (Hear, hear.) Before I go further, I may be permitted distinctly to accept the challenge, which has been more than once thrown out on the other side as to the manner in which this question ought to be discussed. I freely admit and sincerely maintain that it ought not to be discussed otherwise than as a great question, to be considered entirely on a large view of its