

SPEECH

ON THE

UNION OF THE COLONIES.

Delivered by A. W. McLELAN, Esq., Member for North Colchester, in the Nova Scotia Assembly, in the Session of 1865.

Mr. McLELAN spoke as follows :

Mr. Speaker,—We have been charged with making this a party question. But surely the position which members on both sides occupy in reference to it is sufficient to show we are not amenable to such a charge. For myself I am about to address the house in opposition to the views propounded by my political party leader; and let me say that no act of my little political life has given me half the pain I feel in being compelled to take a position, in opposition to that hon. gentleman. There are other considerations which might well cause me to hesitate: not only is the question the most momentous ever discussed here, but there is the further consideration that it has been matured by thirty-three gentlemen who claim, and perhaps not undeservedly, to be among the ablest in British America. But if I might be disposed to hesitate from these considerations, I remember that I am here to act upon my own conscientious convictions of what is right and wrong—of what may be or may not be for the good of my country—and not upon other men's capabilities of forming a correct judgment. For apart from considerations of a personal nature, which may and do too often influence men, there are occasions when the most enlarged and comprehensive minds overlook the useful and the practical in the contemplation of the ideal. So has it been, I believe, on the present occasion. Men have given up to an idea, or a sentiment that which they should never have yielded, except to sound argument and strong conclusive fact.—I believe that the idea or sentiment of union has had very much to do with influencing men's minds upon this subject. When the Provincial Secretary, in addressing the house on the history of this question, referred to the unanimous applause with which the subject of union had been greeted when mentioned on platform or festive occasions, I thought at the time that very much of that applause was given to the sentiment or idea of union, which has always a charm for men's minds, and not to its practical workings when applied

to these provinces. There are perhaps few words in the English language that have such an influence over men's minds as that little word "Union." We have seen in the neighboring republic how powerful an influence this "union sentiment" exercises over the people. Many years ago when the question of the admission of Texas into the Union was under consideration, Daniel Webster, than whom America has not known a mightier intellect, warned the Senate against the extension of territory Southward. That warning voice was unheeded. The union sentiment prevailed, and that union took place. With the greatness and prosperity of the country there grew up an interest in the South which finding its own centre within itself, and growing antagonistic to the North, at length culminated in a demand for a separation. We are all familiar with the history of events from that time to this—that the difficulty resulted in a war which has been unparalleled in its magnitude and in its severity—a war which has furrowed with the graves of the slain the face of that country as thickly as the furrows in a farmer's field.

Looking at the influence which this sentiment has exercised over men's minds at all times, I must conclude that it has also operated largely in the provinces, and that men, carried away by that sentiment, have sought this union irrespective of provincial rights and the consequences that may flow from it. They have forgotten the union that already exists between these provinces—that we are united by the same loyal sentiments—that we are, as the hon. member for Richmond says, citizens of the same Empire—subjects of the same Queen. The same flag that floats over Buckingham Palace floats over our Citadel, and protects the inhabitants of these provinces as well as those of London. Under that protection we enjoy every blessing and privilege that is known in civilized and enlightened society; and I asked myself when the Provincial Secretary, the other night, was speaking of the progress and prosperity of