

Mr. JAURIER. I beg to call the attention of the House to the following memorial, presented to the Government by the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

"TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL IN COUNCIL:

"The memorial of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts respectfully sheweth:

"That the meeting of the Conference at which the foundation was laid of the Confederation of the Provinces constituting the Dominion of Canada, is an event of such importance in the annals of the country as to make it desirable that it should be commemorated in a painting which would present not only the assemblage, but authentic portraits of the distinguished statesmen who took part in the deliberations.

"That such a painting would not only be a work of present interest to the people of Canada, but that the interest will be an ever increasing one, as the fabric of Confederation, the very foundation of which the picture will commemorate, continues to assume still larger and grander proportions, in the extension and consolidation of British North American nationality.

"That every year which is allowed to elapse adds to the difficulty of executing such a work. Already, in the sixteen years since Confederation, several of the actors have passed from the scene.

"That an opportunity now offers for the execution of this work in the presence here of Mr. Harris, a Canadian artist of ability, who has returned from prosecuting his studies and practising his art in Europe, and who is fully competent to paint such a picture.

"The entrusting of such a commission to a Canadian would be an encouragement to the whole profession of Art in Canada. Such encouragement is needed; for the want of it our country has repeatedly been denuded of its most promising artists, who have been drawn away by the recognition of their merits abroad, and other countries are now enriched by the product of their labor.

"Wherefore, we humbly pray that a commission may be entrusted to the artist named for the immediate prosecution of this very desirable work.

"Signed on behalf of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

"L. R. O'BRIEN,  
"President.

"OTTAWA, April 28th, 1883."

This memorial, as I am informed, has been in the hands of the Government for some time past; but the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts have not so far received any answer from the Government. We can all well understand that, perhaps, His Excellency would feel some delicacy in supporting the request for financial aid to a project in which he has himself taken so prominent a part. But believing, as I do, that the idea expressed in this memorial is a good one, I will now beg to bring the matter before the House, with the hope that the prayer set forth in the memorial will receive the unanimous approbation of the House of all shades of opinion. Last year we commenced in this city what we were pleased to call the Canadian Art Gallery, and which we intend shall become in time our National Picture Gallery. Everyone of us will agree that on the walls of that gallery it is very desirable to have pictures illustrating Canadian history—the whole Canadian history—from Jacques Cartier's time to the epoch of Confederation, at all events. Confederation is the last of our great historical events, and a great event it certainly was, for this country. In fact, it is no extravagance to say it was a revolution, a peaceful revolution, but no less effective for all that. Now, it is well known that that measure, as well as two or three other changes of a similar nature, did not at the outset receive the unanimous support of all the people of this country. It was attacked and resisted in many quarters; and I am free to say that in the Province from whence I came, the men with whom I have been associated were at first hostile to Confederation—not hostile to the principles of Confederation—but to the scheme as it was then proposed; but hon. gentlemen in this House know that those men after that scheme had become law, submitted with good grace to what had taken place, and loyally contributed to make it a success. I am sure that many hon. members of this House will remember, and fondly remember, that one of the men who most heartily and cheerfully accepted the new order of things,

though he had been just as sincerely opposed to Confederation while the question was a debatable one, was our late lamented friend the hon. Mr. Holton. Now, in the same spirit, not only to be faithful to the principle of Confederation, but to give it all the illustration in our power, it seems to me that the painting of that historic scene at which the basis of Confederation was laid, would be a highly desirable and very popular work, and it is for that reason that I bring this question before the House. It is not simply because I approve of this project, and think that the event which gave birth to Confederation should be commemorated, but because I think it should be commemorated by a Canadian artist, that I take great pleasure in bringing this matter to the attention of the House and Government. I am anxious to give to our Canadian artists all the encouragement we can give them as individuals and as a Parliament. We are not deficient in artistic talent, I believe; on the contrary, that this country is extremely prolific of artistic talent. Unfortunately, too few of those talents bloom into full development, because of the obstacles which they encounter, and the little encouragement they receive in this country. But, notwithstanding all the obstacles which beset them, we are proud to remember that in almost every branch of art we have distinguished artists whose talents have been consecrated to the best uses. I understand Mr. Harris, who is named in this petition, is one of them. Mr. Harris has prosecuted his studies for some time in Paris, where, I believe, he stands very high in his profession. We have seen some of his pictures exhibited in the Library, and although I am not myself a competent critic of paintings, they have been pronounced of great excellence by men who are capable of judging. We have also all been glad to hear that four Canadian artists have had their works admitted at the Paris Salon, and of those four one is a young lady who bears a name already illustrious in this country; two others are also young ladies, daughters of a gentleman who was formerly a popular and respected member of this House. In another branch of art, that of sculpture, all those who have seen the model for the statue of Sir George E. Cartier, have been glad to know that it was the work of a Canadian artist, who carried off the palm of success against competition all over the world; and everyone of us must come to the conclusion that the achievement of Mr. Hébert is certainly one of which all Canadians may feel proud. In another branch of art, in music, it is a source of pride to us to remember that one of the three great singers of the age is a Canadian lady. Now, these are not the only artistic talents we have amongst us; I am sure we have many others who would make their mark if they had the same opportunity. We all know, doubtless, of some young gentleman endowed with artistic talents, but who, for the want of encouragement, has been obliged to devote himself to some other employment in order to earn his living. Now, I, for one, am desirous to give all possible encouragement to young artists, and for this reason I have a peculiar pleasure in bringing this petition before the House. There is one paragraph which seems to me to be sadly true; it is this:

"Such encouragement is needed; for the want of it, our country has repeatedly been denuded of its most promising artists, who have been drawn away by the recognition of their merits abroad, and other countries are now enriched by the product of their labor."

Mr. Harris has finished his studies abroad, and has come back to our shores, and I, for one, am anxious to give him such encouragement as we can. If the Government, under these circumstances, think it desirable to bring in a small appropriation of \$3,000 or \$4,000 for carrying out the idea here expressed, I have reason to believe that it will meet with the unanimous approval of this House.