

member, let me ask, not what have been his views or his sentiments, but what has been his conduct? He has done his utmost to denude his Scottish friends and constituents of the unconstitutional liberties. When I think of this, I feel bound to tell him, though it may not be a very comfortable piece of information for him to bear in his remembrance, that Scotchmen everywhere are like the guarded emblem of their never-conquered land, and are ever ready to meet the foe who wantonly would tread upon or rudely touch the foliage or the flower of their freedom. (Hear.) They will not be Scotchmen if, when he again ventures to approach them, he does not feel the thrust of their indignation piercing the very marrow of his political existence.

I now come, sir, to the gist of the amendment—the constitutional question, as it has been called; and let me ask if this is a subject in the consideration of which we are to be met with an objection, what I cannot but call a constitutional quibble? We have been repeatedly and vauntingly told that we have shown no precedent that would justify the House in adopting the amendment I have had the honor to propose. To this quibble, sir, I offer in reply the substantial precedent of common sense. It will be time enough when these expounders of constitutional law furnish me with a state of things similar to that existing in relation to this question—it will, I, say be time enough to produce the now impossible precedent. Sir, the question of Confederation is upon us—it is widely regarded as a new and unprecedented malady, endangering the entire body politic,—and how is it to be met? It must be dealt with out of the usual course,—no ordinary applications would be reasonable or wise; it urgently demands the freest treatment, and no treatment seems to me more prudent or consonant with wisdom than the one which I propose in the amendment. This branch of the Legislature must, according to the principles of its constitution, terminate its existence in the course of a very few weeks. Every member of this House will then be called on to meet his constituents face to face. What, I ask, even in reference to the position and prospects of the Administration itself, can possibly transpire between the present period and the period of that inevitable election to induce the Government to oppose the postponement of the question until then?

I must not be understood as wishing to take the final decision of the question out of the hands of the Legislature, but let the matter remain as it is, let the public business go on to completion, and after that is done let the people as is customary and constitutional record their votes, and let the result of that election be their decision of this question. If favorable let it finally incorporated into law when our successors come here. There is and there can be no other question pending in the country of greater importance than this, and I assert that the electors are intelligent enough to decide it on its own merits. With their verdict I shall be satisfied. This is no sudden impulse with me—this is no factious view. From the first moment that the question of union was mooted I have given expression to the same unchangeable sentiment—and in doing so I of course advocated a proceeding that

would have the effect, if adopted, of abridging the term of my own parliamentary existence. Particularly do I consider it as dishonourable in the extreme to adopt any other course than the one I advocate inasmuch as gentlemen here in favor of this measure well know that they are acting in opposition to their own convictions of the existing feeling throughout the Province. In several counties public meetings have been held which have been attended, not by men of one party, but by men representing every political class; and no man can be ignorant of the sentiment which those general gatherings enunciated. The opinions and wishes of other counties have also in other modes been unmistakably expressed. It is, therefore, tyrannical, wrong and unjust in the extreme, with that conviction on the minds of members, to refuse the people the ordinary right of passing on a measure that is to affect them and children forever. What is the end and object of government but the happiness and welfare of the people? Governments are not institutions created for the purpose of hampering a few officials, but to enlarge the interests and promote the prosperity of the country in entire subordination to the well understood wishes of the people. Is this measure, regarded in that aspect, in the least degree likely to secure that much desired end? Mr. Speaker, I have from the outset of this debate purposely abstained from going into the general question of Confederation, the resolution I have submitted affirms the one grand principle that the question should not be decided until the people are heard upon it at the polls.

I might have pointed out many incongruities and unsound and unjust provisions, and many others likely to produce dissensions in the dominion about to be erected, but I have preferred confining myself to the simple but sound principle of appealing first to the people of this country to ask them, the sovereign people as I will call them, whether they will have this Union—this Dominion—or not? I cannot close, however, and resume my seat without this single observation. The Government are about to pass, or expect ere long to see enacted this measure of Union. When passed and enacted will it be worth the paper on which it is printed if the minds and the hearts of the people do not endorse it. Is it merely a stretch of the imagination to fancy a majority returned in opposition to the principles of the bill,—may we not justly anticipate that contingency? And what then? Why of course that there will be an agitation wide and violent for the repeal of this union. In what temper and under what pledge will the representatives of the people come from the polls? by a large majority this house, or the house to succeed it, will be composed of the men opposed to Confederation. Do you suppose, sir, that the sense of wrong and injustice will so soon be effaced from their hearts and memories? No the same convictions that operate now will operate then with tenfold force, and lamentable will be the condition of disorder and confusion in which public matters will then be involved. It is surely more than wise to avoid this almost certain consummation. I ask the house to consider its position and its duty in that view. This argument I feel should operate favorably upon the vote to-night. I conclude, sir, with the hope, sincere and ardent, that the course