

electors of this country? Bold men they must have been who usurped the functions of every man in the Province. They were the men who advocated the principle of going to the polls with every important measure,—some of them had placed on record that resolution declaring that no change should take place even in the Legislative Council without the people being consulted. When they undertook to undermine the constitution, to usurp the rights and stifle the voice of Nova Scotia, they should have shrunk from the responsibility, and asked themselves “are we the men to seize upon the liberties of the people after all the pledges we have given, turn recreant to the trust reposed in, and prevent them from being heard at the polls?” I have asked “who are the men?” I mention first the name of Dr. Tupper, not because it gives me any great pleasure to do so, but because I hold him responsible in the first degree. Being the leader of the Government, he, of all other men, should not have been guilty of this arbitrary exercise of authority. If it is asked how he came to be in power I answer that when the delegates to Charlottetown had got permission of the Governor General to go to Quebec, there to arrange the terms of Union, he, as leader of the Government, should have said “no, the people have never been consulted, and I will not go unless it is understood fairly that the people will be heard before the matter is decided on.” Again, he went voluntarily to England on the delegation,—could he not then have said to the House of Assembly, “I will accept the introduction which the resolution of this Legislature will give me, but a clause must be put in which will bring the matter back to the people at the polls.” Nor is that all,—when he went to England and decided on the scheme, even supposing he considered it a good one, he should have considered the rights of the people, and made a provision in the Act by which they would have been consulted. And, coming down to a late stage, if the truth had been told by Mr. Watkin in the House of Commons in answer to Mr. Bright’s remarks, the operations of the Act would have been suspended until it came back for ratification. Where is the authority for such a course? has been asked.

The Leader of the Opposition refers us to the Corn Laws, the Emancipation Laws, and the Reform Bills. Perhaps his reasoning upon this point may be sound, but it struck me as being a piece of special pleading to say that because the British Parliament passed measures like those, it could pass an act like that which brought about Confederation, destroying our Constitution and affecting every interest of the country. True, those enactments altered, to some extent, the representation of the country, but the highmindedness and honor of British statesmen called upon them to deliver a portion of their people from injustice. Englishmen have ever been jealous of their rights, and so are we. After those measures had been passed the Parliament still remained; it could have repealed them and restored matters to their old condition. This Confederation Act, on the contrary, takes from us the power of altering the laws to suit our Province.

Coming down to a later date we have had cited as a precedent the union of Cape Breton. Now we know that if a witness is put into the box he is considered guilty of perjury if he fails to tell the whole truth. The leader of the Opposition, when he quoted that precedent, should have told us fairly that Cape Breton had no Legislative Assembly. Again the union of the Canadas was effected after the rebellion there, and when commissioners were exercising military authority. Surely these instances bear no comparison to our case. We were in peace and prosperity, legislating according to our constitution, with no sign of quarrel or rebellion. Precedents upon our side of the question have been cited in numbers, the case of the other colonies, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland being proof of the way in which our people would have been treated if the Legislature had acted fairly. I think, however, that the challenge to cite precedents came from the wrong quarter—precedents should come from those who seek to justify the charge that has been made. We asked no change, and those who urged it should be prepared with precedents to establish their authority for what they did. It is hard to find cases exactly in point, for in the history of no country possessing representative institutions has there been such an attempt to subvert the constitution. Precedents which do not apply to the condition of affairs established when the principle of Responsible Government were conceded are not in point, because the Imperial Government, having granted us certain privileges, will not revoke them. It has been clearly shown that important measures have from time to time been submitted to the decision of the people at the polls, and surely that is the course which should have been followed in this instance. It may be considered out of place for me, a layman, to refer to any legal point, but I have found one reference which seems to me to be applicable to this question. In 1825 the British Parliament passed an Act, chap. 114, containing a clause worded in such a way that it will not be denied that thereby some rights were conceded to us, and if that be the case the Union Act cannot be successfully defended as constitutional. It has not inaptly been said that this Union Act was good for those who advocated it. Perhaps if we search all the records of history we cannot find a measure which holds out so many rewards for its friends. The system of increased salaries and multiplication of offices was one of the most objectionable features of the scheme, next to that which destroyed our powers of legislation. I need not dwell at great length on the loss which Nova Scotia will experience by the change,—we lose our public works of nearly every description, and although we go into the Confederation with nearly an equal debt, yet there is in point of fact no comparison between the debt of the Canadas and of Nova Scotia, for ours does not represent a dollar of deficiency, while that of Canada represents twenty-two millions of revenue deficit.

I will now briefly allude to the operation of this Act since the 1st of July. One of the main arguments of those who supported