

consent of the people. A very brief glance at a few salient features of the policy pursued with respect to the question from that time down to the date of its final accomplishment, will show how much reason Nova Scotians have to complain of the trickery, corruption and coercion by which the autonomy of their Province was destroyed, and their political status changed. In the session of 1865, the honourable member from Cumberland, then Provincial Secretary, and leader of the Government of Nova Scotia, stated in his place in the House, that Confederation was at that time impracticable, and would not be attempted. Lulled into a false security by this statement, and by the favourable reception accorded to their petitions, the people assumed that the movement, as far as that Province was concerned, was practically at an end, and made no further effort to preserve the constitution from encroachment. But by-and-by a change came. A second election was held in New Brunswick. It is not my place to enter into particulars as to the secret and extraordinary influence by which the dissolution of the New Brunswick House was accomplished. Enough to say it was accomplished; and by means that even the widest range of courtesy will scarcely enable us to suppose were as honourable as they were successful, a majority in favour of Confederation was secured at the polls in that Province. Then commenced in Nova Scotia the system of petty intrigues that at last culminated in the corruption of the legislature and the passing of a resolution in the House of Assembly, authorizing a new convention to assemble in London. All sorts of influences, fair and unfair, were used to induce members of the House to abandon their principles, and violate the instructions they had received from their constituents. Even the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province forgot his dignity and dishonoured his position by playing the part of a petty canvasser. All those official and social influences within the control of his high station, were freely used, and he did not hesitate even to misuse the name of the sovereign whom he represented, to influence those whose principles he sought to subvert. Senatorships and seats in the Legislative Council of the Province, were among the prices paid to some of the pure minded patriots, whose sudden conversion was so fatal to the liberties of their country. Thus by the treachery of the Executive, that first lulled the people into a false sense of security in order that their representatives might be more easily seduced, was the first

barrier on which the people depended for the safety of their constitution, broken down. Even then, the country although alarmed was not disheartened. It was believed that any measure framed by the Convention would have to be approved, not only by the British Parliament, but also by the Provincial Legislature, when the people would still have an opportunity to be heard, and could cause their influence to be felt. The mother country having conceded to Nova Scotia the right of self-government—having given that Province a Legislature, clothed with power to make all the laws necessary for the management of its affairs, no one could believe that the Parliament of Great Britain would supercede the functions and override the authority of that Colonial Legislature, or that the Home Government, forgetting the traditions, the very first principles of political freedom and constitutional rights, should compel the people of the Province to be governed by a law which their own Legislature had never enacted, for which they had never asked, and against which they had protested in the strongest terms. Relying confidently on the manliness and love of fair play supposed to be inherent in the race of British statesmen, the people of Nova Scotia confidently appealed by petition to the Parliament at Westminster, asking to be permitted to decide for themselves, this question so deeply affecting their present and future welfare. In this last hope they were disappointed—this last and strongest barrier for the defence of their rights was broken down by the action of foes within and without—the pleading prayers of a suppliant people were spurned aside, even from the very altar of the temple of liberty, and British subjects in Nova Scotia were denied the rights which the highest tribunal on earth would not dare to deny to the British subject in England. I do not, Mr. Speaker, deny the power of Parliament, to dispose of this question in the manner adopted. But even admitting the correctness of the theory which says there is no limit to the power of Parliament, I deny the right of the Legislature to destroy the Constitution under which it exists without the popular consent or contrary to the popular will. Admitting the power, was it right, or was it decent even for a people, trained for over half a century to cherish their political institutions, thus by an arbitrary exercise of that power, and for no fault of which they were guilty, by one fell stroke to be swung out of their Constitutional orbit, and thrown into a new system and amidst new alliances, where distrusts, and