

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OF
NOVA SCOTIA.

1865.

THURSDAY, February 9.

The House met at two o'clock, and were summoned by His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor to the Legislative Council Chamber where he read the following

SPEECH:

Mr. President, and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council:

Mr. Speaker, and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly:

1. It has been my good fortune, in other portions of the British Empire, to have been brought in contact, and to have enjoyed much intercourse, with Members of their Legislatures. The recollections connected therewith, and the results of such mutual acquaintance, induce me to look forward with pleasure to the establishment here of similar agreeable relations between Her Majesty's Representative in Nova Scotia and the Members of this Legislature.

2. I rejoice that our first meeting takes place at a moment so auspicious to the material prosperity of the Province, that I am enabled to congratulate you at once on the late bountiful harvest, and on the unprecedented increase of your revenue, as well as the remarkable development of your most important Exports and Imports.

3. This unusual degree of prosperity is the more fortunate, occurring, as it does, at the time when you are invited to consider one of the gravest questions—probably the gravest and most momentous question—ever submitted to the Legislature of this Province. You are thus enabled to bring to its consideration a greater amount of deliberate and calm reflection than if harassed by any disturbing pressure of less fortunate circumstances.

4. At the opening of last Session, the Officer then administering the Government alluded to the identity of the interests of the British North American Maritime Provinces, and laid before you a proposal for devising means of effecting their Union under one Government. The consideration which you then gave to the question led to a resolution requesting the Officer administering the Government to appoint Delegates, not exceeding five in number, to confer on that subject with Delegates from New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

5. It became my duty, on receiving permission from Her Majesty's Government, to give effect to the Resolution. Therefore, with a view to a full and fair discussion, I endeavored to bestow a national character on the Delegation by requesting the aid of prominent representatives of the two great leading parties in the Province. I have directed the report presented to me

by those gentlemen to be laid before you; you will thence learn their reasons for deferring the final consideration of the subject, which you had submitted to them, till another proposal, which had been made in the interim, had been first disposed of, namely, that of a general Union of British North America.

6. When invited by the Governor General to send Delegates to Quebec to discuss that wider question, I considered it my duty to obtain previously the consent of Her Majesty's Government. I then appointed, on behalf of this Province, the same gentlemen who had represented her interests in the first Conference. The second Conference commenced its sittings at Quebec on the 10th October, and did not conclude them till the 29th of that month.

7. The result of their labors, proposing a Union of British North America, on certain conditions embodied in seventy-two Resolutions, has already been made public, and will now be officially communicated to you with all the correspondence connected therewith.

8. The highest authority on such a subject, the Colonial Minister of the Crown, has recorded his opinion of the labors of the Delegates, and has given them credit for the warmest sentiments of loyalty, as also for conducting their deliberations with a patient sagacity, which enabled them to arrive at common conclusions on the most involved and difficult questions.

9. I feel assured that, irrespective of any political difference of opinion, such encomiums from such a quarter, on British North American statesmen, must be deeply gratifying to that great body of Her Majesty's subjects, who are proud to identify themselves with the welfare and reputation of these Provinces.

10. A copy of the Despatch of the Secretary of State, containing those opinions, and conveying the general approval by Her Majesty's Government of the Quebec Resolutions as "the best frame-work of a measure to be passed "by the Imperial Parliament," for the purposes therein more fully adverted to, was received by me on the 22nd December, and by my orders was published the same day for general information. You have, therefore, been for many weeks in possession of the views of Her Majesty's Government, and the country has for a still longer period enjoyed the opportunity for discussing the expediency of the project of Union.

11. It is not my province, and I have no mission to do more than afford you the freest scope for consideration of a proposal which seriously involves your own prospects, and in reference to which you should be competent to interpret the wishes and determine the true interests of the country. I feel assured, however, that whatever be the result of your deliberations, you will deprecate attempts to treat in a narrow spirit, or otherwise than with dispassionate care and prudence, a question so broad, that in reality it covers the ground of all parties and precludes it from becoming the measure of merely one Government or one party.