

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, 7th November, 1867

A Message was brought by Rene Kimber, Esquire, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod:—

Mr. Speaker,

His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this Honourable House in the Senate Chamber.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker elect, with the House, went to the Senate Chamber:—

And there Mr. Speaker spoke to the following effect, viz.:—

May it please your Excellency:

The House of Commons have elected me as their Speaker, though I am but little able to fulfil the important duties thus assigned to me.

If, in the performance of those duties, I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me, and not to the Commons, whose servant I am, and who through me, the better to enable them to discharge their duty to their Queen and Country, humbly claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially, that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to Your Excellency's person at all reasonable times, and that their proceedings may receive from Your Excellency the most favourable interpretation.

Then the Honourable the Speaker of the Senate said:—

Mr. Speaker,

I am commanded by His Excellency the Governor General to declare to you that he freely confides in the duty and attachment of The House of Commons to Her Majesty's person and Government, and not doubting that their proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temper, and prudence, he grants, and upon all occasions will recognize and allow, their constitutional privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the Commons shall have ready access to His Excellency upon all reasonable occasions, and that their proceedings, as well as your words and actions, will constantly receive from him the most favourable construction.

The House being returned;

Mr. Speaker reported, That the House had been in the Senate Chamber, and that he had informed His Excellency that the choice of Speaker had fallen upon him and also in the name of this House, and on their behalf, he had laid claim to all their Rights and Privileges, that they may enjoy freedom of speech in their Debates, and have access to His Excellency's person as occasion shall require, and that all their proceedings may receive

from His Excellency the most favourable construction; to which His Excellency was pleased to say that he readily and willingly granted and allowed the Commons their constitutional privileges, as well as ready access to His Excellency on all seasonal occasions, and that their proceedings, as well as their words and actions, will constantly receive from him the most favourable construction.

ORDERED, That the Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald have leave to bring in a Bill respecting the administration of Oaths of Office.

He accordingly presented the said Bill to the House, and the same was received and read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker reported, That when the House did attend His Excellency the Governor General, this day, in the Senate Chamber, His Excellency was pleased to make a Speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which Mr. Speaker said he had, to prevent mistakes, obtained a copy, which he read to the House, as followeth:—

Honourable Gentlemen of the Senate;

Gentlemen of the House of Commons:

In addressing for the first time the Parliamentary Representatives of the Dominion of Canada, I desire to give expression to my own deep feeling of gratification that it has been my high privilege to occupy an official position which has made it my duty to assist at every step taken in the creation of this great Confederation.

I congratulate you on the Legislative sanction which has been given by the Imperial Parliament, to the Act of Union, under the provisions of which we are now assembled, and which has laid the foundation of a new Nationality that I trust and believe will, ere long, extend its bounds from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

In the discussions which preceded the introduction of this measure in the Imperial Parliament, between the Members of Her Majesty's Government on the one side, and the Delegates who represented the Provinces now united on the other,—it was apparent to all those who took part in those conferences, that, while Her Majesty's Ministers considered and pressed the principle of Union as a subject of great Imperial interest, they allowed to the Provincial Representatives every freedom in arranging the mode in which that principle should be applied.

In a similar spirit of respect for your privileges, as a free and self-governing people, the Act of Union, as adopted by the Imperial Parliament, imposes the duty and confers upon you the right of reducing to practice the system of Government.

which it has called into existence, of consolidating its institutions, harmonizing its administrative details, and of making such legislative provisions as will secure to a constitution, in some respects novel, a full, fair, and unprejudiced trial.

With the design of effecting these objects, measures will be laid before you for the amendment and assimilation of the laws now existing in the several Provinces relating to Currency, Customs, Excise, and Revenue generally,—for the adoption of a uniform Postal System,—for the proper management and maintenance of the Public Works and Properties of the Dominion,—for the adoption of a well-considered scheme of Militia Organization and Defence, for the proper administration of Indian affairs,—for the introduction of uniform Laws respecting Patents of Invention and Discovery,—the naturalization of Aliens,—and the assimilation of the Criminal Law, and the Laws relating to Bankruptcy and Insolvency.

A measure will also be submitted to you, for the performance of the duty imposed upon Canada, under the terms of the Union Act, of immediately constructing the Intercolonial Railroad.

This great work will add a practical and physical connection to the legislative bond which now unites the Provinces comprising the Dominion, and the liberality with which the guarantee for the cost of its construction was given by the Imperial Parliament is a new proof of the hearty interest felt by the British people in your prosperity.

Your consideration will also be invited to the important subject of Western Territorial extension, and your attention will be called to the best means for the protection and development of our Fisheries and Marine Interests.

You will also be asked to consider measures defining the privileges of Parliament and for the establishing of uniform laws relating to Elections, and the trial of Controverted Elections.

Gentlemen of the House of Commons;

The circumstances under which the Act of Union came into operation, rendered it impossible to

obtain the assent of the Legislature to the expenditure for carrying on the ordinary business of the Government.

The expenditure since the first of July has therefore been incurred on the responsibility of Ministers of the Crown.

The details of that expenditure will be laid before you, and submitted for your sanction.

I have directed that the Estimates for the current and succeeding Financial Year shall be laid before you. You will find that they have been framed with all the attention to economy which is compatible with the maintenance of efficiency in the different Branches of the Public Service.

Honourable Gentlemen and Gentlemen;

The general organization and efficiency of the Volunteers and Militia have been greatly improved within the last year, and the whole Volunteer Force of Ontario and Quebec is already, by the liberality of the Imperial Government, armed with the Breech-loading Rifle.

I am happy to be able to congratulate you on the abundant harvest with which it has pleased Providence to bless you, and on the general prosperity of the Dominion.

Your new nationality enters on its course backed by the moral support, the material aid, and the most ardent good wishes of the Mother Country. Within your own borders peace, security and prosperity prevail, and I fervently pray that your aspirations may be directed to such high and patriotic objects, and that you may be endowed with such a spirit of moderation and wisdom as will cause you to render the great work of Union which has been achieved, a blessing to yourselves and your posterity, and a fresh starting point in the moral, political and material advancement of the people of Canada.

Sir John A. Macdonald moved that His Excellency's speech be taken into consideration to-morrow.—Carried.