

to acquire the right of the Hudson's Bay Company over those territories. As is well known, the Hon. George Brown never was a supporter or an upholder of, or a believer in, the National Policy. So the acquisition of the North-west Territories was not at all a part of the National Policy, which was then a thing unknown, but it was accomplished in pursuance of the policy of completing the edifice of Confederation. Now, Sir, we have a new Government. At last we have that strong Government which was heralded some months ago by the hon. First Minister himself as the strongest which Canada ever had since Confederation. Whether this was another flight of imagination I will not inquire. I will not inquire whether the present Government is stronger than any of its predecessors—stronger than the Government of Sir John Macdonald at Confederation, stronger than the Government of Mr. Mackenzie in 1873, or stronger than the second Administration of Sir John Macdonald, or even stronger than the Administration of Sir John Abbott. Comparisons are odious. I shall not inquire into that subject; but one thing is certain, one thing is indisputable, leaving aside quality, and looked at quantity, the present Government is by all means the strongest that Canada ever possessed. The Dominion has now no less than fifteen Ministers to advise the Crown, and three more to advise the advisers; and if, with so much advice, the Crown is not properly advised, it is simply because the advice is radically bad, which I am rather inclined to believe. But even if the advice were tinged good it may turn out to be with Government as it is with cookery, "too many cooks spoil the broth." The hon. gentleman has taken upon himself to advise the Government to bring into force two still-born statutes, passed six years ago, and allowed from the day of their birth to moulder under the dust of useless legislation; passed, though there never was a demand for such legislation, passed, though they were never put into force, yet no inconvenience resulting. One of the hon. gentlemen who proposed the Address, the hon. member for Terrebonne (Mr. Leclair), said that legislation was necessary. These measures may have been necessary in one sense, not certainly for the welfare of the country, but for party exigencies, in order to harmonize colours and shades, so that the Orange and the Green may not offend the eye of one section, but please everybody. I take exception in this respect, and not only in this respect, but in some other respects also, to what has been said by my hon. friend from Terrebonne (Mr. Leclair), though I offered him, as well as the hon. member for Kent (Mr. McInerney), my very sincere congratulations on the manner in which they have discharged the duty they have undertaken. They have discharged that duty with credit to themselves, and so as to earn the congratulations of both sides

Mr. LAURIER

of the House. The hon. member for Kent, I may say, has caught at once the true ministerial spirit. The true ministerial spirit, in these days, is to proclaim in season and out of season, on every occasion, whether fitting or not fitting, "The country is prosperous." You remember, Mr. Speaker, the scene in Othello, when Cassius has been at last persuaded by the wiles of Iago to taste of the baneful cup. He imbibes enough for his companions to notice the condition into which he has fallen, and in order to dissipate their impression he declares, "Gentlemen, I am not drunk." I am reminded of this scene when I hear hon. gentlemen opposite, members and ministers, upon every occasion, repeating, "The country is prosperous." They seem to believe that, judging from the state of things which exist all around, the people might come to a different conclusion, and so, in order to bring them back to a more orthodox mood, they keep on repeating, "The country is prosperous." They seem to believe that by making the assertion "The country is prosperous," they will convince the people, as perhaps they have succeeded in convincing themselves. Strange prosperity this, from which the people are fleeing, thousands and hundreds of thousands every year! Strange prosperity which the people will not remain in the country to enjoy! What would be the difference if, instead of prosperity, there was adversity? Would there be any different state of things at the present time? I am aware that the leader of the Government attempted, some weeks ago, to minimize the evils of the exodus. The hon. gentleman attempts to show that the state of things is not so bad as it appears, that though there has been an exodus during the last decade, the exodus is not in the same proportion as in the previous decade. Sir, all the hon. gentleman has to do is to consult his own blue book and that will tell him a very different story. The hon. gentleman is doubtless aware that his own blue book shows that during the previous decade, that is during the decade from 1871 to 1881, the population increased by 19 per cent, whereas, in the following decade, the decade from 1881 to 1891, the percentage of increase declined under the National Policy, the increase of population falling from 19 to 12 per cent. I am aware the hon. gentleman says that the figures are not perfectly accurate, that there is a discrepancy in the manner of taking the census. I do not at all accept that explanation; but there can be a stronger arraignment of the manner in which the census has been taken than the explanation now volunteered by the Government. We on this side of the House again and again protested against a census de jure, we wanted a census de facto. The hon. gentleman now acknowledges that the census is not so correct as it might be; but even if there are discrepancies, which I am not prepared to admit, those discrepancies