

and the same thousand engaged in the ordinary mechanical and industrial pursuits of the country competing as free labourers. Were they in a worse condition? Certainly their labour was less efficient than it would be if they had the attributes of free men; so they competed less as criminals than as honest citizens. The honourable member for Kingston had said these men did not really do a great deal of harm while they were at large, but the moment they were confined they were brought into conflict with honest labour. They ought then to try and remedy that mischief and to leave these men at large. The logical inference of the argument of the member for Frontenac was that the prisoners should do nothing. But what were they to do with them? If they must not employ their labour they must pension them. There was one class of persons they pensioned for long and faithful work for the State, but here was a class of criminals whom they were to pension in order that the whole population might not suffer by their industry. That was a very extraordinary theory of political economy which the honourable gentleman opposite adopted. When they occupied the treasury benches they asked for money to enter into competition with the free labour of this country by bringing out immigrants, and yet they complained because the prisoners in the penitentiary, by compulsion of the State, were made to do the very thing they put immigrants to do. Supposing that the views of the honourable member for Kingston were carried out, leaving out the objection which the honourable Minister of Justice had pointed out, that these men could not obtain employment after they came from the penitentiary. If they engaged them at unprofitable pursuits how were they to make up the loss which the State sustained? They would have to put a tax on the industries of the country. These considerations were perfectly conclusive to his mind, against, he would not say the arguments, but the clap-trap suggestions of the honourable member for Frontenac."

and so on in a speech of the same deep philosophy which is the admiration of people who don't know anything of practical economy. (Laughter.) I said in the same debate (page 1202) that there had arisen a cry, the justice of which had been recognized in England and also in France, against the subsidizing of prison labour for the manufacture of goods that would compete with free labour.

Then in 1879, when the present Government was in power, I stated (Hansard 1879, page 1537) from my place as leader of the House: "My opinion has always remained the same on this point, that it is a great misfortune that the labour of convicts should be brought into competition with that of honest men outside, and that that should be cured as much as possible. We commenced with the view of doing away with the contract system by degrees. It could only be done by degrees, because we had contractors there who had much plant and had running contracts. The principle will be carried out as much as possible that the convicts should interfere as little as possible with the honest labour of the country."

Mr. Mills, however, in 1879 was as wise and philosophical as in 1877. He said, (page 1539):

"He was rather surprised, although he had heard some very extraordinary doctrines of political economy laid down since this session began by the honourable member for Montreal East. He remembered very well the discussion that took place on the subject last year. He thought it was the honourable member for Frontenac that suggested that the convicts in penitentiaries should be employed at some labour that would not be of the slightest use to them when they had served their time. Now, the position taken by the honourable member on that occasion, and the position taken by the honourable gentleman who had spoken that day, had intimated that these people were in a wholly different position to the industries outside. In the Kingston Penitentiary they had 800 or 1,000 convicts. These people, if they were outside would probably be producing a greater number of articles which would come into competition with the products of the rest of the community. Then the labour of the convicts was less efficient than it would be if