

Liberals can say, and that is that they were not afraid of having a platform and did make a platform which met the approval of the mass of the people. We did not hesitate to call together the representatives of Liberal principles in order that we might prepare a platform which would suit the requirements of the country. But how is it with my hon. friends opposite? For some years we have had discussions among them as to how they might get a platform. Again and again we have had it announced that at some future time, the next summer or the next recess, some time in the early future, a great Conservative convention was to be held for the purpose of framing a platform. That convention, however, has never yet been held. My hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) was reminded about his failure to call such a convention. Let me read to him an extract from one of the papers; and in order that I may not be charged with partisanship, I shall read from a Conservative paper. Here it is, in striking headlines:—

A Conservative convention is demanded by western men.

Mark you, Mr. Speaker, 'demanded.' And demanded for what purpose? To draw up an advanced platform.

Winnipeg, September 18.

Yesterday Mr. R. L. Borden, leader of the Commons opposition, spent in Winnipeg, and was in conference most of the time with the leaders of the party in Winnipeg and Manitoba. A petition was presented to him demanding that he call a big Conservative convention to draw up a progressive and advanced platform.

They already had the Halifax platform, which had been published and scattered to the wide world. But that was not good enough. It was not liberal enough, broad enough and advanced enough. So these Conservatives met the hon. gentleman, and they met him—if not with a shot gun, with something very much like it. They wanted him, not to dictate the platform, but to get the party to make one. It was pointed out to my hon. friend that only by holding a big convention could proper enthusiasm be aroused and a platform, agreeable to both east and west, be formulated. But there was no platform, and I suppose that is the reason why there was not much enthusiasm.

The petition stated in plain terms that if the request were not granted the support of the party in Winnipeg and Manitoba and likely in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia would be withdrawn.

Mr. LALOR. Is that the 'Eye Opener'?

Mr. FIELDING. No, it is the Ottawa 'Evening Journal,' edited by a gentleman who, jointly with the correspondent of the Toronto 'News,' may be described as the two closest political friends and apologists in journalism of my hon. friend the leader

Mr. FIELDING.

of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden). At all events we have this condition of affairs. The Liberals had sufficient faith in their leader and their principles and their ability to agree on questions of principle, to assemble together from ocean to ocean, in the city of Ottawa, under the shadow of parliament, and lay down the policy which they thought the country could adopt. And whatever hon. gentlemen opposite may say regarding that policy, this will stand to the credit of the Liberal party, that, according to the true principles of Liberalism they did not allow two or three men to get together in a dark chamber and devise something, and say that is to be the policy of our party. No, they gathered together the representatives of the mass of the people, the representatives of the democracy of Canada, and they made a platform which has been their guide from that day to this.

My hon. friend made some references to the Post Office Department, which calls for a passing notice. He said that he had just been out west, and had discovered that the postal service there, and he believed generally, was in a very inefficient condition. Well, if the service which is rendered to-day be inefficient, in Heaven's name what must have been the condition in 1896? There is no department of the government which has done more to improve the facilities and convenience of the Canadian people. I do not say that it has done all it should. In the speech from the Throne, we have the declaration that the surpluses which have been accumulating in that department, should and will be applied in securing more liberal accommodation for the people. But let us not omit to take notice of the tremendous progress which has been made. In 1893 or 1894, the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) will remember in one of his budget speeches he said that some portion of the Canadian people were clamouring for a two-cent instead of a three-cent rate, but that the country could not afford it. And so long as the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) remained in power the country did not afford it. What was the condition of the Post Office Department at the close of the last year of Conservative administration? There was a deficit of about \$650,000 on that year's operations, and there were accumulations of deficits of former years to an amount somewhat in excess of \$650,000; and a vote had to be taken to clean up the old account and pay off the old deficits. But in 1896 these hon. gentlemen, who are supposed to possess in such an extraordinary degree the instinct of government, had to give place to other men—we are too modest to say better men. What then happened? I have already told you that there was an accumulated deficit in 1896 besides a deficit for the year. But what has been the result since? In 1907, instead of a de-