

tion for the seventeen or eighteen years in which we have been living under it, the Local Legislatures acted upon the right to make laws upon a particular topic, and the Central Legislature did not interfere with the exercise of that right, can we ask more cogent or plainer proof of the understanding of the people as to what the meaning of their Constitution was? I ask whether, except in case of urgent and absolute necessity, a meaning which was expounded by 18 years' practice should be attempted to be violated? Well, it was attempted to be violated, and upon the very doctrine to which I have referred—that of necessity. It was announced to us that

THE LAWYERS HAD FOUND OUT

that we were all wrong, and that our Constitution made it something wholly different from what we all, except a few of us, one being the late Minister of Justice of Canada, had supposed, and that now it was found that the jurisdiction was at Ottawa, and not with the Provinces, and that of necessity we must act. We disputed that proposition. We said that nothing of the kind had been discovered, and we said more—supposing you are right, and the jurisdiction is with the Dominion, what we ought to do is to take steps to make the Constitution agree with the common sense of the people as to what it was, instead of proceeding to violate that common sense. [Loud applause.] We were told nothing of the kind shall be done, our amendments were expelled, and a law was passed, based upon the idea that such a law was necessary, taking the control of the liquor traffic, so far as could be done, into the hands of the Dominion. Then the next year the event which we anticipated came to pass, and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council decided that the local laws on this subject had efficacy and vitality—were not the waste paper we were told in the city of Toronto they were. (Loud and prolonged cheering.) Then we pressed upon them to repeal their law, since the argument of necessity was shown to have no force. No, the second act of the drama was gone on with. We were told that, as a matter of policy, this law should be kept upon the statute book, if by some hook or by some crook, some cunning device of the lawyers, the jurisdiction could be held by the Dominion, though the Province had adequate jurisdiction. An arrangement was made for a statement of a case to the Supreme Court to ask its decision upon the question, and it is only this morning you have heard that the unanimous judgment of that tribunal in all the disputed points, the point with reference to the liquor licenses, except wholesale and vessel licenses, which may be put to one side, the law of the Dominion is void. (Tremendous applause.) Now there, you see, we have triumphed under the Constitution. But

I want to say to you, to-night, on the very night of that triumph, that the most important question is the other one which I put to you—the question of policy. In what spirit shall we act at Ottawa? Shall we, after it has been established, after eighteen years experience of all the Local Legislatures, that a particular attribute is theirs, and when it has been decided by the Courts that they have that attribute, struggle to deprive them of it? ("No, no," and applause.) Shall we go on litigating further if we can, by some hook or crook, to find something that shall take away that power from them and give it to the central authority? I say, No. (Cheers.)

THE TRUE UNIONISTS

in this Canada of ours, with its sparse population, with its diverse nationalities and interests, are they who recognize the principle of local laws and local powers in the widest and most generous spirit. (Loud applause.) I say that it is by recognizing the fact that the people in a vast area of territory can most effectually legislate for themselves in the great masses of questions, that we shall promote a real union in those things in which we have really a common interest. And, if there be one instance above another in which local excitement, local opinion is important in deciding the expediency and efficacy of law, it is upon that question in which the attempt had been made and will be persisted in, I fear, to take away the power of the Local Legislatures and legislate for the whole Dominion at Ottawa. (Loud and prolonged applause.) I congratulate the Liberals upon the series of triumphs which have attended their efforts to establish the federal principle and to enforce federal views. But, I say to them their work is not done, so long as these persistent efforts to minimize that principle go on, and that we must set our faces as flints against these aggressions which have been made in the past and will be persisted in in the future, and that our doing so is essential to the prosperity of this Canada we love. Now, Mr. Chairman, there are other questions upon which I would say a few words, because I have to deal with some pressing questions which have been before us for some years—are before us this night for decision. There is the question of

COMMERCIAL TREATIES.

We have believed for a long time that it was extremely important that we should enlarge our foreign markets. Both parties have agreed upon this. The party in power proclaimed that it was one of their most earnest objects to enlarge our foreign markets by making arrangements with divers countries. They have been in power for a good many years and have not succeeded in taking the first step as yet in the enlargement of the market. (Laughter and applause.)