

tell you this, and let no man think I am exaggerating, when I say it, that in the rural districts of the Province of Ontario out of twenty or thirty meetings held by the Ministers there were not three at which there were three hundred people present. (Laughter.)

And so we have decided that it is not necessary for us to go on what is called a tour throughout the province, but we will go to certain places and attempt to show what is the position and the claims of the Conservative party with reference to the benefits which we say we will be able to bring to the people of the Province. Someone has said, perhaps it was both Mr. Foy and Mr. Charters, that the Ministers and their party have not admitted that they have done anything wrong or that they were sorry for having done anything of the kind. Well perhaps occasionally we have heard expressions of regret for some of the acts of some of the friends of the Ministers, but I have seen nothing yet in the nature of any expression which shows any penitence for their crimes. And penitence is necessary. Does not the well known Lenten hymn say,

"In vain the outward sign of grief,  
In vain the formal prayer,  
Unless the heart implore relief  
And penitence be there."

Who ever heard of penitence being expressed by any apologist of the Ross Government? (Applause.) Ask my friend Mr. John Smith whether they are sorry and whether he feels penitence; whether he can beat his breast and find an echo coming from there that tells him he is permeated with the spirit of penitence for the misdeeds as a supporter of the Ross Government? (Laughter and applause.)

#### THE SCHOOL BOOK QUESTION.

Coming to the consideration of public questions let us take the question of education, than which there is no question of greater importance. (Hear, hear.) We have stated over and over again the position of the Conservative Party, and I will now refer only to the subject of school books. A sensible system of school books must be brought into existence and the people not be worried and harried as they have been year after year with regard to them. (Applause.)

Mr. Ross tells us, with the greatest condescension, I was going to say, that it costs only a few dollars to buy all the school books necessary for the Ontario course. What do I say in reply? I say nothing about it, because I know that you know what you pay better than Mr. Ross knows (Applause), and therefore I do not think it worth while to take up your time and my own proving to you what you spend for school books when each one of you knows best himself, if any person on earth knows. (Applause.) A practical revolution is needed in the Department of Education in this province, and unless I am very much mistaken the appointment of a Superintendent of Education will become absolutely necessary before very long. Mr. Ross, in 1897, issued a commission in secret to a number of gentlemen to inquire into, take evidence on, and report on the question whether the price of school books was too high. He did this in secret, a thing that no British Cabinet Minister has ever been guilty of doing, and I have challenged over and over again, without getting a reply, the production of an instance of such a thing having been done. The public was not made acquainted with it; the members of the Legislature knew nothing of it. The commission met in secret and took evidence, and on the day before the last day of the Session of the last Parliament, in January 1898, the report of these gentlemen was laid on the desk of each member too late to be discussed. And this was the first intimation that such a commission had been issued. And what do you think the report was? Why, it was that the price of school books was not too high. (Laughter.) Now I have their report here, and a list of the witnesses, and