

ing history of this Dominion of Canada for thirty-eight years. Did it occur to him in his self-jubilant that of that thirty-eight years twenty-five years were under the guidance of a Liberal-Conservative government and a Liberal-Conservative policy? Thus, though the country is prosperous—and we admit that prosperity, and maintain it, and rejoice in it—we must not come to the illiberal conclusion that that prosperity is to be attributed to the hon. gentlemen opposite, who came into power in 1896.

Another note is that the population is increasing. We are glad of that. The population is increasing by virtue of immigration, the attraction of those without; and population is also increasing by virtue of retention, that is, attraction of the people who are born within the country and who are kept within the country. There was no possibility of these two forces working to their full extent until that period of opening up and of proving up of the country was gone through with, so that confidence would be given, so that the productive power would become known and would be strong to draw people from abroad, and also to keep in this country its own sons, rather than have them go to foreign countries. These are things which we should bear in mind when we come to give reasons for the great progress and the great prosperity of this country. That hon. gentlemen opposite have done what in them lay in order to take advantage of these conditions and have, to the extent of their ability and in good faith, striven in order that this prosperity might have its constant and unchecked growth is to their credit, and we give them full credit for it, but it is quite another thing to make the policy which has been in force for eight or ten short years in this country the father and sponsor and creator of all the prosperity in this great, broad Dominion. But I can read in the smiling face of my hon. friend opposite, and in the smiling faces of the mover and seconder of the address the great idea that the country has endorsed them; that it has wiped out and condoned all their sins of the past, that it has given them a full mandate for the future. Well, whatever comfort there is in that let hon. gentlemen take it, let them enjoy it to the full. But sometimes it is possible that a great victory may cost too much, and may in the end prove too expensive—too expensive for the party itself and for the country as well. A victory gained by fair and reasonable argument, upon a representation of policies and principles, is a victory which is enduring; but a victory which is to be ascribed to other influences than these, may be, as I have said, too expensive and too costly.

The opposition had some things to contend with in the last election. It is strange, but it is absolutely true, I think, that prosperity tends to dull the critical faculty; and a government which goes to a country in a time of prosperity slips through with less of its sins of commission and omission scrutinized

than it does under different and less auspicious circumstances; and hon. gentlemen opposite, in gauging their victory, must give a little credit for their fortunate escape to the prosperity of the country and the dulling of the critical faculty which results from that prosperity.

There are some things, though, that have been injected into the late contest and that have contributed to the late victory, which are not quite so pleasant to contemplate. I do not think that ever before in the history of this country was there a hard and fast co-partnership made between a government and an immense and widely extended corporation. Whether that is to the interest of the country, whether in the long run it be even to the interest of the corporation itself, is something which is well worth considering. In this last election an immense corporation actually adopted the party flag and the party shibboleths, and set itself with untiring and relentless force to elect the government through whom it proposed to get, and by whom it was promised one of the greatest and richest franchises that have ever been given to a corporation. Whether that is indicative of good conditions in the present, or of sound conditions in the future, or not, is a thing which I think may be well open to doubt, and which may well be given serious consideration. But I know from personal experience, as does almost every man sitting on either side of this House, that one of the most relentless forces against which His Majesty's loyal opposition had to strive in the last election, was the untiring, immense and widely extended influence and power of the corporation with which the government had allied itself. In every constituency where their power was felt, the suffrage was made to aid their purposes, the suffrage of their employees was thrown strongly, by all the influence that could be brought to bear, for the government and against the opposition—and generally for what purpose? For the immense franchises and gain and profit which promised to come to them if the government were sustained and the opposition were defeated.

Outside of that, am I right or wrong, Mr. Speaker, in saying—and I leave it to the country to decide—that there probably never was in the history of this country an election in which the argument of the material was more profusely and relentlessly used than in this last election. I acknowledge that it is a difficult thing in a young and growing country to entirely eliminate from the electorate the discussion and consideration of public works; but there is certainly a sane and decent limit by which this ought to be bounded; but in this last election, from one end of this country to the other, it did seem as if the great argument, the great consideration, the great point brought before the electorate was the dangled bribe of public works promised by the candidate