

there are other changes than changes in trade matters contemplated. I hold that we should not now be placed in the same position as we were placed in 1897, of seeing our representatives go to London without our knowing exactly what are the subjects to be treated of at that imperial conference. What were the terms of the invitation of 1897? In his official despatch, dated January 28th, 1897, Mr. Chamberlain wrote:

Should this invitation be accepted by the premiers of the self-governing colonies there presence in London would afford a most valuable opportunity for the discussion of many subjects of the greatest interest to the empire; such as commercial union, colonial defence, representation of the colony, legislation with regard to immigrants from Asia and elsewhere, and other similar subjects.

That was a very broad programme, but it was never made known to the Canadian people. An order in council was adopted on the 15th of April by the Canadian government, and this order in council I have found in the British blue-books. Well, I don't think a Canadian should be compelled to search the British blue-books for information about what the Canadian government is doing. This was the report from the sub-committee of the Privy Council of Canada:

The sub-committee further join in the hope expressed by the Right Hon. Secretary of State that it may be found possible to take advantage of the assemblage of the premiers of the self-governing colonies for the discussion of the many and important questions of interest to the empire, to which he has referred. The sub-committee unite most sincerely in the hope that the result of the approaching celebration may be such as will tend powerfully to cement the union between the mother country and her colonies, both socially and politically.

The House was then in session and continued in session for some months after. We had the announcement that the Prime Minister was going to represent us, and while I do not quarrel with any man who is in favour of changing the relations that may exist between Great Britain and Canada, I do say that when the Canadian government sent representatives to England with the object of discussing a change in these relations, the least that the Canadian parliament and Canadian people should expect is that they would be informed of it by the government, and not be obliged to search in British blue-books for an expression of opinion by the Canadian government on such an important matter.

Coming to the paragraph in the Speech from the Throne which relates to the census, I may remark that the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) criticised the government quite violently in this regard. I do not think that the facts justify the hon. gentleman in that criticism. What is the use of bringing forward in this House the argument: that because the Liberal party of some years ago accused the government of the day of pursuing a policy which caused

the slow growth of the population, the opposition of to-day should say: 'This paragraph in the Speech from the Throne is not founded on fact because the increase in the population during the Liberal regime is no greater than it was under Conservative rule?' For my part I believe that the government has painted the situation in its true light. There is no doubt that the result of the census has been disappointing, but there is no doubt either that this paragraph in the Speech from the Throne is perfectly true:

There is good reason also to believe that the increase of population during the latter half of the decade has been very greatly in excess of the average of former years and that in the near future we may look for a much more rapid growth than occurred during the period covered by the last two censuses.

The constituency which I represent is in the midst of a colonization district, and I am myself a witness to the fact that during the first five years of the last census, not only was settlement at a standstill, but the people of our farming districts were leaving daily for the large Canadian cities and the United States. I believe—and this without any idea of flattering the government—that from 1891 to 1896 the increase in our population was at a standstill, not because the Conservatives were in power, but because of circumstances into which I am not going now to enter, our people emigrated more at that time than at any previous period. Within the last five years, twenty new parishes have been constituted in the region of the Gatineau, and in the La Lievre Valley and the Rouge Valley. Between 1896 and 1900, in my own constituency alone, not speaking of the neighbouring constituencies, six new parishes have been organized for religious and municipal purposes. In the district of Labelle the increase during the last ten years was 6,000, but I firmly believe that the whole of that increase took place during the last five years.

There is no doubt that something should be done to encourage and increase our population. The hon. the leader of the opposition has suggested a stronger help to industries, but for my part I would suggest a stronger help to farming and to colonization. The hon. gentleman has pointed out that industries in Cape Breton have attracted a large influx of population, but he has also admitted that there has been an enormous decrease in the rest of the province of Nova Scotia. The hon. gentleman may believe that were it not for the coal and steel industries of Cape Breton, these people would perhaps have remained in the rest of the province of Nova Scotia, but while it is better to have these people working in the mines and steel works of Cape Breton than to have them go to the United States, it would be still better to keep them on the farms. After all the bone and sinew of our country is its farming population. This is a farming community.