

gentlemen should be improved out of existence, they still are in existence? Are we to suppose again that on this occasion the public weal has been sacrificed for private convenience? There was another measure proposed: an improvement was to be made in the Department of Justice, an improvement which turned out to be the appointment of a Solicitor General. You are aware, Mr. Speaker, that not the slightest word of objection was offered on this side of the House to that measure; on the contrary, it has been for a great many years the opinion on this side of the House that the appointment of such an officer was requisite in the public interest, and, indeed, this was one of the measures brought down by the Mackenzie Administration when they were in power. I am aware that the measure at that time, though it is now acknowledged to be in the public interest, was bitterly assailed, combined though it was with another measure, that is to say a measure for the suppression of the office of Receiver General, which would have made the new office cast no additional burdens on the revenue of the country. That measure was bitterly assailed and finally it was defeated, if I remember rightly, in the other House. But after ten years the Government took up those two measures, and I am glad to say that the Administration of the hon. member for East York (Mr. Mackenzie), who I am also sorry to say is kept away from his seat by ill-health, has received the fullest vindication at the hands of its own adversaries, those who opposed it with great vigor at that time; and I can add that this is not the only instance where the course and policy of the hon. gentleman has been vindicated, and the people are commencing to appreciate the value of the services which he gave to the country, and to realise that the most valuable public servant is not he who panders to popular prejudices, but he who seeks to carry out true principles, though they may fail to give him victory, but lead him into defeat. It was in the public interest last year that we should have a Solicitor General; yet this year we have no such officer. Again I ask, what can be the matter? The ministerial press told us, if I recollect correctly, and prominent supporters of the Government told us, that the right hon. gentleman was feeling the pulse of the constituencies to see whether the country was favorable to such an office; whether the pulse was responsive or not we do not know. But here is the fact, that three measures which were brought down last year in the public interest, and which were placed upon the Statute-book, are still inoperative. Again I ask, what can the matter be? If those measures were brought down simply as adornments of the Speech from the Throne, I prefer the frank statement of Sir George Cartier, who said that he would not be satisfied until the Speech from the Throne contained nothing but the Supply Bill; if, on the other hand, those measures were brought down in the public interest, the Government is censurable for not having acted upon them. Several measures which are to be brought down this year will certainly, if they are carried out, prove to be of interest and value to the country. The election law is unsatisfactory as it is, and ought to be amended, and I hope the first amendment which will be made to that law will be one depriving the Government of the power they have to-day of selecting the returning officers, and embodying the principle that the man who is to stand as umpire between contending parties should not be selected at the bidding of the candidate, as has often been the case in the past, but should be a permanent officer of the law, as in every other country. With regard to the Controverted Elections Act, we have certainly seen enough during the recess to convince us that it requires improvement, for we have found judges in Ontario, in Quebec and in New Brunswick differing from each other as to the proper interpretation of the Act, and it is time for us to try to settle by legislation the questions which jurisprudence has not been

Mr. LAURIER.

able to settle, with regard to the Franchise Act. That Act has certainly a very checkered career. It was passed in 1885, put in operation in 1886, suspended in 1887, and is to be amended in 1888; and I express the hope—I do not know whether it will be fulfilled or not—that it will be repealed in 1889. Sir, the more that Act is discussed, the more apparent I believe it will become that the principle advocated by the Opposition is the true principle, namely, that the franchise should be left to be fixed by the different Provinces, because the franchise is a complex question, the application of which must vary according to the education, the manners and the habits of the people of the different Provinces. With regard to the Fisheries Treaty, I think it is premature to discuss that question at this moment, and I am not going to express any opinion upon it just now. The Speech expresses the hope that the treaty will be found to be honorable and satisfactory to both nations. Well, Sir, I will only say that I hope it may, but I would not be led to that conclusion by a perusal of the blue-book which was issued by the Government, and the most admirable Minutes of Council which were prepared and sent to England in support of our contention as to the interpretation of the Treaty of 1818. The Speech affirmed the great prosperity of the country, and both the mover and the seconder of the Address have devoted the greatest portion of their remarks to an emphatic demonstration of that assertion. Sir, I have always marvelled at the resolute tenacity with which ministerial orators continue to affirm, in spite of the facts, that the country is prosperous. I make the completely contrary assertion—I say that to-day the country, far from being prosperous, is in the very reverse condition.

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. LAURIER. Yes. I say there never has been a time in the history of Canada when the agricultural classes, who form the bulk of this nation, have been in so depressed a condition as they are in to-day. The truth is, there is to-day a general feeling of discontent, and a desire for something to turn up which will remove the agricultural depression which exists. My hon. friend the member for Halimand (Mr. Montague) quoted statistics to prove that we are prosperous; but if we are, why is it that hundreds of Canadians are turning their backs on this prosperity? How is it that, day after day, hundreds and thousands of our people are leaving that prosperity to seek homes on the other side of the line? The permanent exodus from which this country is suffering is the best evidence that this prosperity, of which ministerial orators so frequently talk, exists only in their mouths; and against the boasting and self-glorification which we constantly hear from them, the 1,000,000 Canadians who are to-day living on the soil of the United States are a living protest. I can understand emigration from distressed Ireland, from over-populated England, from Scandinavia, and from Germany, where the people are crushed by the iron heel of a military despotism; but why is it, I ask, that this free country cannot keep its native population at home? The reason is not to be found in the country itself; it is as good a country as can be found under the sun; but the reason is in the vicious economical system which exists, and it cannot be found in anything else. It has been our aim for many years past to open to settlement the vast and fertile fields which we possess. We have sent agents to Europe who have not painted our country in the black colors in which the hon. member for Halton said it was painted by American agents. We have sent agents to Europe who have done their best to bring immigrants to this country, and to a certain extent they have succeeded. Immigrants have been brought here, but where are the settlers? Not only immigrants, but our own people are deserting in scores, and hundreds and thousands, and what can the cause be if it is not to be found