

MR. MILLS' SPEECH

At Thamesville, 25th May, 1878.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen : As the time over which the present Parliament extends will expire in March next, and as it is possible that another session may not take place before the elections, I think it well that I should avail myself of an early opportunity after the session of addressing you on various topics of public interest and importance. You are aware that the present Government have been in power since November, 1873, now nearly five years. They have had the duty imposed upon them during that time of administering the public affairs of this country, and you have had ample opportunity of comparing their conduct and administrative capacity with the conduct and capacity of those who preceded them. Various charges have been made against us by our opponents—some of them affecting the honesty and some of them the ability of the members of the Government. These charges are too numerous and too important to be dealt with in a single speech ; and it is, therefore, my purpose, at the different meetings I intend holding within my constituency, to answer the accusations made by our political opponents fully and completely ; to contrast our conduct in office with their conduct in office ; and to

COMPARE THE POLICY

which we have marked out for ourselves in the future as being in our estimation for the advantage and interest of the country with that which is indicated by their various speeches and the resolutions they have moved in Parliament and endorsed at their party caucuses. It will be my duty also to speak of matters which more especially concern my own department, and particularly Manitoba and the Northwest Territories ; to discuss those subjects which are under my own special cognizance as a Minister of the Crown, and in which, on account of my being your representative, you will no doubt feel more interest than you otherwise might. On four occasions during the past twelve years you have accorded me your confidence as the guardian of your interests in the Parliament of Canada ; on four occasions have the Reform party of the County without dissent given me their earnest and cordial support. You have again nominated me as your candidate at the forthcoming contest. Need I tell you, gentlemen, that

I HAVE NO MISGIVING

as to the result? I am grateful for the confidence and the hearty and disinterested support which I have heretofore received, and I shall indeed have great pleasure in discussing with you fully, and without any reservation, the various matters which are now occupying the public attention, and which at no distant day must be submitted to the arbitrament of the nation. There seems to be a disposition on the part of the Tory party to make the financial policy of the Government the subject of adverse criticism, to charge the responsibility for the straightened circumstances of the population upon that policy, and to hold out to the country the hope—a vain one, I confess—that if we were turned out of office, and they were restored to authority, this condition of things which has prevailed to a much greater extent in Great Britain and the neighboring republic than here, would wholly disappear. A state of things would then prevail throughout this Dominion which, if we could but credit a small proportion of what these gentlemen tell us, would make our populations almost as happy as they who lived in the

FABLED AGE OF SATURN.

It is my purpose to analyze this picture, so flattering to its authors, and so condemnatory of the Government ; to examine the various representations made to their advantage and to our detriment, and to ascertain so far as the facts will permit how well, or how ill they accord with truth. First, I would call your attention to the line of argument taken when what is called the "National Policy" was first enunciated. I speak with perfect accuracy when I say that when it first made its appearance it was an unexpected, and to many, an unwelcome little stranger. I shall examine it, so as to enable you to perceive all its limbs and features, as they were in its infancy. I shall point out to you what vicissitudes it has experienced, and what modifications it has undergone ; and I shall call your attention to its present appearance. You will thus see how much it has changed as it has grown, and how very different it is at this moment from what it was when first presented to you for your favor by its progenitors and patrons. It reminds me of a story once told