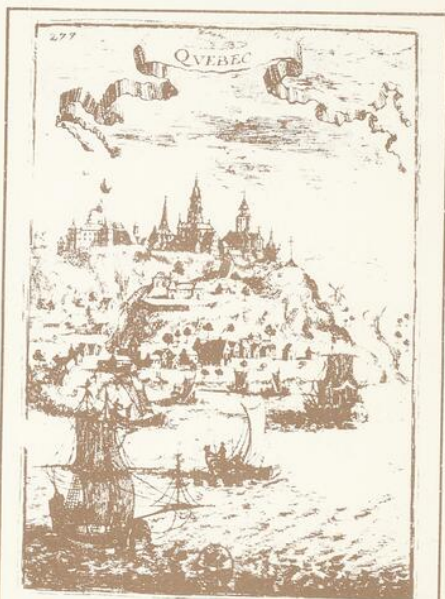


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ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN.

SPEECH DELIVERED
BY THE
HON. HONORÉ MERCIER,

Premier of the Province of Quebec,

AT THE
CONVENTION OF THE NATIONALISTS OF THE DISTRICT OF QUEBEC,
HELD AT TARA HALL,

On the 15th May, 1890.

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GENTLEMEN,—I have taken the liberty, on the advice of the principal leaders of our party in Quebec, to call you together in order to lay the foundations of a strong and vigorous electoral organization for the campaign which is about to open.

As you are aware, the Legislature is dissolved ; nominations are fixed for the 10th and polling for the 17th June next.

We have, therefore, only a month to organize the victory which is not doubtful to any mind, if I am to place any reliance on the news reaching me from all parts.

I therefore respectfully beg of you to immediately form a grand central committee which will have the general management of the contest in the whole of the Quebec division, that is to say, of all the counties to the east of and including Three Rivers and Arthabaska. This general committee will choose an executive committee composed only of certain members, of a President, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and two other persons who will be charged with the carrying out of the decisions of the central committee. You will, doubtless, make it your duty to name as members of this last committee persons devoted, active, experienced, and at the disposal of the party at all times.

MEANING OF THE STRUGGLE.

But before letting you proceed to the election of members of these two committees, allow me to make a few remarks, appropriate to the occasion and as brief as possible.

The struggle which is about to open is of the highest importance to the Province of Quebec ; its autonomy and consequently its dearest interests are at stake. Are the Provinces to remain sovereign as regards their legitimate attributes, or are they to become the slaves of the Federal power ? This is the chief question which the electorate are called upon to decide during the elections about to begin.

The question is exceedingly grave, for upon its solution depends necessarily the life or death of the Confederation. In point of fact, if the Provinces cease to be their own masters, and become the slaves of the Federal power, the ruin of the Confederation will necessarily and, within a short time, follow. If, on the contrary, the autonomy of the Province is maintained in all its integrity, the Federal union will be more strongly maintained than ever under one form or other.

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That is to say, as briefly as possible, that those who are for the maintenance of the union should be in favor of the Provinces, and that those who are for the rupture of that union should be against the Provinces.

It is useless any longer to deceive ourselves on this point, and to attempt to conceal the true situation. The autonomy of the Provinces is the sole basis of the maintenance of the present union; and the centralization of power at Ottawa will have for inevitable consequence the rupture of that union.

For whose and what benefit will this rupture take place? Will it be in the interest of Independence or Annexation? This is a problem which I am not called to solve; it is a secret of which the future alone can reveal the mysteries.

It is allowable, however, to state, that whatever may happen, Independence or Annexation, our destiny is seriously threatened, and our future gravely compromised, if Provincial autonomy is not safeguarded.

The loss of this autonomy means, in the first place, the rupture of the colonial bond and the fatal and necessary entry of the Provinces into an unknown political situation, in which, being isolated, they would be unable to protect themselves against the unforeseen events by which they would be threatened.

This is the chief meaning of the struggle which is now about to open: maintenance of the autonomy of the Provinces and consequently of the colonial bond; or rupture of the colonial bond, and consequently the unknown with all its dangers.

The present Government has constituted itself the champion of Provincial rights and has striven to maintain Provincial autonomy. Its maintenance in power means the maintenance of that autonomy and thereupon consequently depends the natural and legitimate development and the prudent and safe preparation essential to fit our country to take its place among the nations of the world when the hour of its emancipation strikes.

To defeat the present Government involves the rash and fatal putting of ourselves into the hands of those who are unconsciously but surely working to bring about legislative union, which means the annihilation of the Provinces, or Imperial Federation, which means the annihilation of Canada.

We are over five millions of people in this country, which, divided into Provinces, independent one of the other, has great destinies in store for it, if its public men know how to develop its immense resources with intelligence, prudence and patriotism. It is the duty of all men of heart, whatever may be the race or religious belief to which they belong, to join hand and heart in securing that future. Let us therefore cease the quarrels that divide and weaken us, and unite our strength under the same flag, to assure the public prosperity and the realization of the sublime destinies in store for us!

Alas! let us say it among ourselves, instead of union we have division, and, while our adversaries are united in their efforts to crush us, we are divided in our efforts to defend ourselves.

FRENCH LANGUAGE—SEPARATE SCHOOLS.

What do we witness, in fact? Is not the abolition of the French language in question, is not the abolition of separate schools threatened, and yet the French language and separate schools are guaranteed by the organic law of Confederation?

OUR ENEMIES.

Who is it wants to abolish the French language and separate schools? In Toronto and Ottawa they are the allies of the *Bleus* of the Province of Quebec. Mr. Taillon has never, that I am aware of, repudiated Mr. Meredith or Mr. McCarthy, who are both agreed upon attaining the same end. That end, everyone knows, involves the abolition of the French language and of separate schools.

I do not believe that Mr. Taillon shares these ideas, accepts these fatal opinions, and is ready to endorse their triumph. No: but he is doing what he did in 1885 and 1886. He is mute in presence of the foe. He dares not resent the attack of the enemies of our race and our religion. In 1885 and 1886 he refused to intervene against those who were crushing our brethren in the North-West, and now he is silent in the presence of those who want to banish the French language and to destroy separate schools.

It is always the same old story, the same disgraceful, fatal story, it is the minority in the person of Mr. Taillon agreeing to crouch before the majority in the person of the Orange-

SAFETY ALONE IN UNION.

What is to be done under the circumstances? Only one thing—to unite as one man to repel the attack.

The fanatics want to crush us.

See what our adversaries are doing: not satisfied with harangues in the newspapers, on the hustings and elsewhere, they are forming associations; they are uniting and seeking to mutually strengthen themselves not only to repel imaginary assaults, but, what is more serious, to carry the war into our midst and to deny us the full and entire exercise of the rights which are guaranteed to us by the constitution, the law and the treaties.

Who are the men who are fighting the present Government in the Province of Quebec? The allies of Messrs. Meredith and McCarthy, the two enemies of our race and creed.

Let us have the courage to tell the truth, for it is the truth; the *Bleu* papers, which are fighting us here, are supporting Meredith in Ontario and McCarthy at Ottawa.

We are confronted with the same enemies—enemies of our race and creed, and consequently of the autonomy of the Provinces. The two things go hand in hand. One must be for or against the Provinces; for or against Legislative Union; for or against Imperial Federation. There is no halfway. The lines of demarcation are clearly defined by our adversaries. In Ontario, Mr. Meredith blames the Mowat Government for not preventing the teaching of French in the public schools. At Ottawa, Mr. McCarthy blames the Federal Government for not banishing the French language wherever it has a right to be spoken. And those who are fighting us here are fighting Mowat there; the alliance is not admitted, but it is not less a fact and a reality, besides being logical and natural.

And is it face to face with such a situation that the inhabitants of the Province of Quebec would refuse to unite, would remain indifferent, and would not join hand in hand to resist the unfair and criminal attack of our adversaries?

Whom do they take us for? Are we outcasts, pariahs by nature, degraded, only deserving of public contempt?

If such be the case, I have only to resign, to retire into private life, and to wait until my countrymen prove that they are not heartless.

But, no. I say it fearlessly, my fellow countrymen, to whatever tongue, to whatever reed, or to whatever nationality they may belong, are men of heart. They will never allow fanatics to put their foot on their throats; they will defend themselves and repel the unjust and dishonest attack of which they are the object.

They want peace at all cost; and will make considerable sacrifices to maintain it. But if war becomes necessary they will submit to it with regret, but with courage and energy, and, let us say it proudly, with success.

No cowardice? Peace is what we want, but peace for all, that is to say, the peace which means equal justice to everyone, to Catholics as well as to Protestants, to French as well as English in all the Provinces.

OTTAWA'S FATAL INFLUENCE.

We are not deluding ourselves in any way,—the facts are there, clear, numerous, and evident to everybody. Our adversaries are under the influence of Ottawa, to that extent that they do nothing without getting their inspiration from the leaders of the Federal Government.

Turn over the history of the last few years and what do you find? Blind submission. Blind, humiliating, fatal, submission of the leaders of the *Bleu* party at Quebec to the leaders of the *Bleu* party at Ottawa. Why do they deny it?

The Inter-Provincial Conference of 1887, which brought together all the political men of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Manitoba, in order to demand justice for all the Provinces, an additional grant, which would assure the autonomy of each Province of Confederation, by securing its independence, should have rallied the public men of all the Provinces. There is but one opinion on this head: it is strong, vigorous, emphatic, and boldly proclaims union as an indispensable necessity, against the selfish interests of a few misled individuals in the same party.

There is but one way to save ourselves; it is to create union. There is another way very certain to lose us—it is, to keep up division.

As a matter of course, our adversaries, inspired by certain persons, are seeking to divert the attention of the electors from the real situation. For them, the country is not in danger on the autonomy question, but solely on that of the finances. We are not threatened, say

they, by Ottawa; we are threatened by ourselves. According to them, the question is not whether Provincial autonomy should be protected, but whether we should save a few dollars to the detriment of the night schools, colonization, railways and other subjects of public interest.

Let us briefly examine this pretension of our adversaries and see what truth there is in their charge!

DEFICITS AND SURPLUSES.

In order to turn public attention from the questions which should be submitted to it, our adversaries have started and are keeping up the cry of extravagance and asserting that we are driving the Province to bankruptcy. Drive, they say, the present Ministers from power, and you will see that our charges are truthful. Drive them from power, say they, if you wish to avoid direct taxation.

And yet the men using this language are the same who ruled from 1867 to 1887, during twenty years, with the exception of a few months, during which Mr. Joly was in power, and during that time they created a debt of twenty millions, and changed surpluses into deficits which they piled up to the extent of over two millions from 1875 to 1887.

And yet since we have come to power, we have changed deficits into surpluses, and greatly improved the situation under this head as under all others.

When our adversaries were in power, they denied the existence of the deficits, which are now proved beyond question by the official documents, prepared under their own direction, and by officers appointed by themselves.

Since we have been in power, they deny that there are surpluses, and yet those surpluses are officially established with as much official certainty as were their deficits.

Their statements therefore on this head were false, and are officially contradicted by their own documents.

Their statements to-day on the same head are just as false. They are contradicted by the public documents. They are contradicted by a man like the Hon. Mr. Shehyn. Everyone knows the present Treasurer, everyone admits that he is an honorable merchant, whose signature is worth gold, and whose word is respected. He has risen gradually but surely in public estimation, and has attained the position he now occupies, thanks to his assiduity and irreproachable conduct.

Is it reasonable to think, is it fair to say, that such a man is knowingly deceiving the country? Clearly not, and it is not only our right, but our duty to believe his word.

INCREASED RECEIPTS.

Well, if the reign of deficits has ended, for there can be no doubt whatever of the existence of deficits before we came to power, the financial situation is improved. And if it is true that we are spending more, we have also received more since, notwithstanding the legitimate increase of expenses, we have a surplus. Before we came to power, the expenditure was lower, but there were constant deficits; since we have come to power the expenditure is higher, but we have constant surpluses.

Are the people going to prefer the men who spent little and indebted the Province, to those who spend more and run it into no debt?

Take the year expired on 30th June last, and what says Hon. Mr. Shehyn of it on page 10 of his budget speech of last session. He declares that the ordinary receipts amounted to \$3,628,184 and the ordinary expenses to \$3,543,618. He therefore affirms that the surplus amounted to \$84,565.56, and he adds: "The House and the country will therefore be happy to learn that the ordinary operations of the last fiscal year showed a surplus of \$84,565.56 notwithstanding the predictions of our adversaries, who, by means of skilfully manipulated calculations and figures, have sought to make out that the operations of the year have culminated in a large deficit."

Where is the honest man who will contest these assertions, made officially from his seat in the House, by a man like the Hon. Mr. Shehyn.

At page 11 of the same speech the present Treasurer adds: "In 1886, the year so much extolled by our friends of the Opposition, the ordinary receipts only amounted to \$2,949,562.15, while those of the year 1889 have come up to \$3,627,932.20, which shows an increase of \$678,082.05 over the year 1886."

If this be true, and who dare deny it, the increase of the expenditure is not only justified, since it does not compromise the financial situation and still leaves a surplus of receipts over expenses, but it has become necessary, because it is the indispensable condition of the

public prosperity. If the receipts increase, the expenses must increase. The two go together, because, apart from the fact that to produce more we must spend more, it would not be wise not to take advantage of the increase of the receipts to further and more surely develop the public resources.

Moreover, the pretended increase of the expenses is much less than is asserted by our adversaries, and, to ascertain its amount properly, we should not do as our adversaries have done : Confound the ordinary with the extraordinary expenses, the revenue with the capital expenses.

EXTRAORDINARY EXPENDITURE.

The ordinary expenses of the year 1889 were \$3,543,618.64, (page 7 of Hon. Mr. Shehyn's same speech), and the payments of all sorts were, for the same year, \$5,124,136.79, the difference of \$1,580,518.15 representing the extraordinary expenditure, such, for instance, as the loan to the Protestant Insane Asylum, at Montreal, \$15,000, plus \$7,821, part of the proceeds of the sale of the Leduc farm, \$125,729 for the construction of the new Parliament Buildings at Quebec ; \$42,733 construction of the Quebec Court House ; \$50,000 for the enlargement of the Montreal Court House ; \$26,324 for the Codification of the Laws ; \$10,000 for explorations in Dorchester and other counties ; \$10,000 for compensation for errors in surveys in Rouville ; \$50,000 for iron bridges in municipalities ; \$50,000 for seed grain ; \$1,049,847 (over a million,) for subsidies to railways, &c., &c.

Is there a reasonable man in the Province who blames this extra expenditure ? No that I know of. The Opposition themselves approved of it because they could not do other wise, as these \$1,049,847, paid in railway subsidies, were so paid as the result, as far as three-fourths are concerned, of their own policy. How can they blame us for that expenditure. It was they who decreed it by voting the railway subsidies' law.

GOOD LAWS.

But, for argument sake, let us admit that the expenses are too high ; then it is only right to endeavor to ascertain the reason. What is that reason ? We have stated it so often that it should be needless to repeat it. In the first place, the business has considerably increased ; the creation of a Ministry of Agriculture and of that of President of the Council ; the augmentation of the cost of the administration of justice ; the adoption of a special system to better secure the collection of the revenue of the Crown lands and other departments, &c. All these matters have been discussed and judged. The Opposition pretend that we did wrong in creating a special ministry of agriculture and colonization, and, consequently, in placing additional burthens on the public. We are not of the same opinion, and it is for the people to decide between us in the last instance.

ABOLITION OF THE SPECIAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND COLONIZATION.

If the verdict, which the people are called upon to render at the forthcoming elections, be against the Ministry, we shall bow with respect to their decision and retire ; but then, our adversaries will be obliged to abolish the department intended to favor the interests of agriculture and colonization. And the farmers and settlers, who constitute the immense majority of the country, will be deprived of a special representative in the Ministry.

RESULTS OBTAINED.

Moreover, cannot the people of this Province, in view of the results obtained, pardon us a few additional expenses ? Will they refuse to take into account the settlement of the Jesuits' Estates question to the satisfaction of all the interested parties ? Will they refuse to allow for the establishment of the night schools ? Will they refuse to take account of our iron bridge policy ? Will they refuse to make allowance for our efforts to macadamize the turnpike roads and to abolish toll-bridges and toll-gates ?

Will the people be satisfied to only examine our expenses, without giving any heed to our receipts ? Will they push injustice so far as to look only at the debit side of the sheet

and not cast a glance also at the credit side? Will they reject us because we are spending a few dollars more and refuse to acknowledge the general benefits of the intelligent and progressive policy we have inaugurated?

No, and it would be an insult to the people to believe so. The people are fair, reasonable, intelligent and honest. They will judge us on the whole of our policy, and not on a few details only.

THE PROTESTANTS.

Efforts have been made to arouse against us the Protestants of the Province of Quebec, and, thanks to this dishonest and artful tactic, deplorable prejudices have been perhaps excited against us; but, thank God, these prejudices have disappeared. Reasonable and intelligent Protestants now understand that we are determined to do them justice, and that the rights of the minority will be respected, and, at need, defended by the present Government. Is it necessary to recall the facts which have happened for some time past? When certain Protestants refused to do us justice, we gave it to them as amply as possible; when certain Protestants insulted us for having settled the question of the Jesuits' estates, we granted to their co-religionists what they demanded; we brought the law into accord with their ideas; further guaranteed the existence of their legitimate rights; increased their share of the indemnity; helped the construction of their schools and colleges; and finally crowned that fair and intelligent policy by asking an almost wholly French and Catholic Legislature to vote \$10,000 to help to rebuild a Protestant house of education, destroyed at Toronto, in a Province three-quarters English and Protestant.

DOWN WITH THE CLIQUE.

Down with the clique! This is the war cry to be found in certain papers in Quebec, Montreal, and elsewhere. It would seem that, without knowing it, I am the chief of a clique, the leader of a gang of robbers. (Laughter.) As long as I was not Premier, I was regarded as an honest man; (laughter) but the moment I became so, in the opinion of certain persons, I ceased to be an honest man, and constituted myself the head of an organized gang to plunder and ruin the Province.

What is that clique? If we understand properly what our adversaries mean, it must be composed of the Ministers and their surroundings. Of the Ministers! Admitting that the fact alone of my reaching the Premiership must have and has rendered me unworthy of public confidence, which is hardly probable, hardly fair; but let us say so for fun sake; there remain my colleagues, those who are helping me in my daily work to manage public affairs. Who are those colleagues? Let us leave aside for the moment the younger ones, only to speak of those who have attained a more advanced age than mine. The younger ones! They are doing their share of the work, and I know that they are doing it conscientiously and that they enjoy the public esteem. Let us take the oldest; let us take Messrs. Garneau, Shehyn, Ross and Rhodes. Is there a man in the country who will dare to say that these four men are not worthy of the respect of the population of the Province of Quebec? (Applause). Would they be worthy of the respect of that population, if they were helping me to plunder and rob the Province? (Laughter). They are here and can speak for themselves and I hope they will admit that no Premier has kept his colleagues better posted in all the events, the details of the administration.

I have no secrets from them; I consult them on everything, and nothing is done without asking their advice. (Applause). And would it be possible that I should consult them on the accomplishment of those acts of rascality with which I am charged, and that those gentlemen should remain with me. (Applause).

The clique! (Applause). The clique! But look at my surroundings, you have an idea of it at the moment. Look here on the stage, and let those here look there at the respectable crowd before me; there is the clique; there is the people; there are my friends. (Applause). Those who surround me to-day are the same who surrounded me in the day of battle; then, seeing me crushed by numbers, fourteen only in a house of sixty-five, these men of heart gave me their hand, sustained me, and fought for me on the hustings and in the papers. That was my clique then, and is my clique to-day. (Applause). I have not changed, and the clique has not changed, and those who are scandalized to-day at seeing around me the men of heart who are helping me, have only to recall the memories of the struggles from 1883 to 1886 and they will find around me in prosperity the same friends I had in adversity. (Applause). But, gentlemen, down with the clique

Why? Because, if respectable friends constitute a clique, it is dangerous for the clique robbers, &c., and it is perfectly well known that a clique was formerly organized to rob and plunder the Province of Quebec. It is perfectly well known that the people, in one of those days of wrath which it sometimes has, drove out the clique. (Applause).

And it is known, gentlemen, more to-day than ever, that those who carried out the sale of the railway, in 1882 belonged to the clique of the men who figured in the Pacific scandal of 1872, who have just brought about the Rykert scandal, and who are mixed up with the McGreevy scandal in Quebec. (Applause.). And it is perfectly well known that while we, notwithstanding what is said to the contrary, remain poor in public life, giving all we can in the first place to support our families, and next to help works of charity, to help education, to help all just causes, those who are treating us as a clique enriched themselves when they were in power, and crush us to-day with the sumptuousness of their style.—(Applause).

Gentlemen, believe me, these cries of our adversaries are meant to divert your attention from the true situation, and if there were in the party to which I belong, which I conduct at the moment, and which I hope to lead to victory—(Applause)—a single man disposed to credit these charges, let him say so and we will change leaders in order to preserve the flag.

Men pass away, but the cause abides. (Prolonged Applause.) Let us surround the flag with respectable men, if it be thought that those who are defending it to-day are not so. But, for the love of God and of the Province, let us assure the triumph of that flag by our devotion, our patriotism and our energy. (Applause.)

ECONOMIES.

It is said : But how do you justify the general result of your administration of affairs? You have reached a frightful figure of expenditure.

Who is saying this? Those who practiced economy, not by reducing their own salaries, not by reducing the indemnity of members, not by lessening the profits of contractors, but by reducing the grants to our educational and charitable institutions. (Applause.)

They practised economy by cutting off the support of the good nuns whose devotion to the poor and infirm touches every heart, and draws tears from every eye. Cutting off a hundred dollars here and there, taxing public charity, and calling on the nuns to gather up our orphans, our sick and our infirm and forcing them to be satisfied with the modest alms which they threw to them.

They practised economy by saying : Here is an educational institution, Protestant or Catholic, giving free instruction to a large number of poor children, we will reduce or cut off its grant ; it was thus they practised economy, by taxing charity and education. We do not want to practise such economy, and we shall never do so, gentlemen. (Applause.)

The day on which the people desire men to carry out such economy and to snatch a few dollars from our houses of charity and education, let the people say so ; we shall retire and allow to come back to power those who are heartless enough to brutally carry out such economy. For our part, we have not the courage to do so.

On the contrary we have increased the grants to our charitable institutions ; we have increased the grants to our educational institutions, and see to-day the colleges and convents which are arising in the Province of Quebec ; see the buildings which are going up even in this city ; buildings for Protestants, buildings for Catholics. We have helped them, and shall help them again if necessary (applause), because, gentlemen, we consider that the finest capital that the Province of Quebec can have is intelligence. (Applause). And the only way to develop that capital is by education. (Applause).

And if there be anything which should give pleasure to the hearts of the citizens of this province, it is the maintenance of our charitable institutions and the help we are giving to those holy women, who spend their whole lives in devotion to the poor and the unfortunate. (Applause.)

INCREASING THE EXPENSES.

It is also said : your expenditure has increased ; yes, but, what about the jurors and Crown witnesses? Before we came to power a citizen was dragged from his work, sometimes he was a poor man, and he was told : you are a juror, you will be shut up for ten days, and you will get half a dollar a day. You are a witness, you know a fact which can help society to protect itself. You will come up as a witness ; you will give your time for nothing ; and if you are too poor, if you must ask a few cents to support your children, you will be forced

to swear that you are needy ; you must expose your poverty to the public, and then the province will throw you an alms of a dollar a day to indemnify you for the expenses which you have incurred to serve your country.

That is the system which we found in force, and we said that it should cease. The free and independent citizens of the Province of Quebec who are called upon to become judges, for a juror is a judge, should be treated like the other judges. The others are judges of the law, they are judges of the facts, and the law is more easily learned than the facts. We told the juror : You will be treated like a judge, you will be treated like a citizen. Instead of locking you up in dark and cheerless rooms, we will treat you like free and independent men. And you, the Crown witnesses, we will treat you as witnesses in ordinary cases between private parties, with the respect due to those who assist the administration of justice. (Applause).

The expenditure is increasing. Who are the men who say this and who condemn our policy ? The men who doubled the expenses from 1867 to 1888, and the men who preached economy in Opposition and practised extravagance in power. And to get back there, these men tell you that they will bring back jurors and crown witnesses to the old *regime* which you know so well.

THE TAX ON THE INSANE.

In 1882, Mr. Chapleau, then Premier, caused a law to be passed, taxing the municipalities for the care of the insane. This was a tax on an infirmity of human nature, it was a tax on family despair, because the municipality paid, but it had to recover from the family ; and the Government, in receiving these poor patients, while being supposed to succor them, said to the municipalities : You will have to pay the one-half of the cost of their support and you will recover from their families.

So that, in despair, at seeing one of their members bereft of his reason, families were exposed to having the bailiffs at their doors to seize their goods for the recovery of this tax on misfortune. We have suppressed that odious tax ; we have wiped it out of our statute books, for it was a stain on our laws. (Applause).

Ah ! gentlemen, to-day whatever misfortune may befall one of yours, the State comes to his help ; the public institutions are open to him and the day on which the asylum doors close upon one afflicted by fate, his family is no longer exposed to the danger of seeing the spectacle of their domestic grief dragged before the public by the revenue agents. (Applause.)

OUR ADVERSARIES' POLICY.

But at least, amid all these contradictions cast up to us by our adversaries, among all the expenses of which a crime is made, is it possible to distinguish what would be their policy, if they returned to power ? I have been in politics for 28 years ; I have been a member for nearly 20 years ; I have been Premier for 4 years ; I have watched, listened to, and observed my adversaries, and I have constantly but vainly asked myself, what is the aim of their efforts and of their tendencies and what is their policy ?

And the other day, when Mr. Taillon's programme was announced, I said to myself : At last ! We are going to get something new, for in the House Mr. Taillon contented himself with condemning the Government, his policy being negative. I read, and recognized the old programme of my adversaries, revamped, but always the same. No promise, no formal pledge, only an absolute and unreasonable condemnation of our policy, without proposing anything in its stead. Still they cry : The expenditure is too heavy ; it must be reduced. Is that a programme ?

Gentlemen, if the expenses are warranted, as I have just shown, it is not a good principle to condemn them, and a proof that they are warranted is that they were approved and voted by our adversaries themselves.

NEW LOANS.

But, they say, it is necessary to go further, and place the Legislature in tutelage ; we must appoint a curator to the Ministers, and that curator should be the people, says Mr. Taillon. The Legislature cannot authorize the Government to borrow a cent, except in cases of urgency, without asking the people to first ratify that authorization.

Where does such a law exist ? Nowhere. But, say those gentlemen : "Let us put this Government into tutelage ; let us also put the Legislature about to be elected into tutelage, and we will thus succeed in lowering, degrading and humiliating the Province of Quebec. It

will be the only Province in the Dominion with such a law on its statute book, and thenceforward it will be declared incapable of having a responsible Government, and then the Province of Quebec will become the laughing stock of the other Provinces of Confederation and its population will be humiliated."

Consequently, the other day, one of our friends at Ottawa, Dr. Guay, was so well impressed with this point, that he asked the Federal Government, if it was their intention to get a law passed in the sense of Mr. Taillon's programme, and Sir John Macdonald, able statesman as he is, ridiculed the idea and answered boldly in the negative.

What then becomes of this fundamental item of Mr. Taillon's programme? Sir John has disavowed Mr. Taillon's programme as he disavowed the laws of our Legislature. (Laughter.)

WHAT REMAINS ?

This is all. But, at least, in this programme, there is something touching the great questions of the day. Well, gentlemen, you have read this programme; you all know that there is a great social movement going on in the whole world; you know that in Europe, in America, everywhere in fact, the labor question, the workingmen's question, has become the most important question, after the question of religion, that can arise for the discussion of peoples. (Applause.)

An extraordinary movement is everywhere taking place. You see the workingmen uniting in bodies, marching with their banners ahead, well dressed, showing respect for law and order, but at the same time claiming their rights. You see them asserting their position everywhere, demanding reforms, urgent under the circumstances, I do not say all, but a good number; and demanding education, demanding schools to enable them to become more useful to their country, and to help them to discover the true means to assure their welfare and that of their families.

The Government has acceded to these just demands, and responded to the workingmen's legitimate aspirations by establishing night schools.

THE WORKING CLASSES.

But the working classes have many other subjects of gratitude towards the National Government. Have we not named inspectors to visit all the factories of the province, in order to protect the health, the life of these poor toilers? Have we not even gone to the length of sending a distinguished specialist to the Hygienic Congress of Boston for the purpose of studying the improvements that should be introduced in the hygienic condition of our factories?

Have we not had laws passed to better regulate the labor to which children were subjected in the factories? Have we not protected the workingman's wages against seizure by often too hard-hearted creditors? Have we not intervened for the first time between the great public works contractors and the workingmen to get the latter paid their wages, which would otherwise have been infallibly lost through the dishonesty or bankruptcy of their employers. It is thus that we have paid \$40,000 to the workingmen of Hereford, \$48,000 to the workingmen of the Bay des Chaleurs, \$112,000 to the workingmen of the Montreal & Sorel Railway? Here then is upwards of \$200,000 which have gone into the pockets of the workingmen, and which would have been infallibly lost without the Government's benevolent interference—let our adversaries cite a single case in which they have done as much. Workingmen! You are men of heart, and we have a right to count upon your gratitude. And it is at the moment that the Government over which I preside is establishing night schools and spending fifty thousand dollars to spread free education among the working classes, who desire to get the bread of intelligence as well as the bread of the body from day to day, that Mr. Taillon issues his programme without a word about the labor movement which is taking place, about the labor organizations, or about the night schools. (Applause).

Therefore, if he came back to power, the workingmen's associations would be the least of his care, the night schools would disappear and he has not even a word of encouragement for the workingmen on these two great and vital questions for them, while we have to show facts, deeds and works; our schools are open and have worked admirably all winter. (Applause).

THE FARMERS.

What we have done for the education of the working classes we are also anxious to do for the farming class, and consequently, if they wish it, we shall give them night schools, too. As there is a complaint that a large number of the sons of our farmers do not follow the courses of our agricultural schools, because they have not the means to pay their board, we will also give them free education in order to increase the number of model farmers. We have placed at the command of the Council of Agriculture, a certain number of bursaries to be distributed among the most qualified candidates. These societies will recommend the pupils and the Government will pay their board in our agricultural schools.

With this increased resources we shall assure to the devoted men, who are at the head of our agricultural schools, the means of accomplishing all the good which want of means has hitherto prevented them from doing. And the brave people of our rural districts, will thus get their fair share of the sacrifices which we are thoroughly determined to undertake for the spread of technical education everywhere and among all classes.

NO MORE MONEY—RUIN—BANKRUPTCY.

But what do our adversaries' papers say ! Take care ! Mr. Mercier has precipitated the elections because he has no more money. (Laughter). And, once the elections are over, he will contract a new short loan. He will have five years before him, he will spend as he pleases, and all you will get for your trouble will be an additional debt.

Those who say this are the same men who created a debt of twenty-two millions in the space of ten years without consulting the people, despite the people, and against the people. Those who say this, are the same men who built a railway at a cost of thirteen millions and sold it for seven millions. (Applause).

Those who say this, are the same men who, in 1881, presented themselves before the people suddenly and under false pretences, obtained a crushing majority, and declared at the beginning of the session—those who were present will remember the fact—that, in selling the North Shore Railway, we would have no need to borrow a cent, and who, on the day after the sale of the North Shore Railway, asked leave to borrow four millions. (Laughter and applause).

It is the same men, gentlemen, who two years later asked to borrow three millions and a half. Seven millions and a half in the space of two years !! Is not this nice ?

Those who tell you that if you give us your confidence again I will take advantage of it to contract a fresh loan, are the same men who are working to prevent the conversion of the debt, a financial operation which would have the effect of saving us a large sum of interest every year. But, in the idea of those men, the conversion of the debt should be prevented, because it is the salvation of the Province of Quebec and its institutions.

It is also the same men who are telling you : "If Mr. Mercier is re-elected he will contract a large loan and take advantage of it for himself and his friends." Just as if the law permitted me, gentlemen, to give a single cent of the public money otherwise than with its sanction and authorization and by special vote of the Legislature !!

But I desire to take no one by surprise on this head ; I do not want to be maintained in power under false pretences and by subterfuges, and I will now state what I intend to state everywhere throughout the campaign.

Our adversaries left us a floating debt of seven millions and a-half ; we have borrowed three millions and a-half and we have paid all that has fallen due to extinguish this crushing debt, left us by our adversaries. Since then we have contracted new engagements in the shape of subsidies to railways. We have settled and paid to the Bishops and colleges \$400,000 for the Jesuits' estates and in a few days we shall pay the part coming to the Protestants, \$63,000. Our adversaries have left us law suits involving several millions and we soon shall have to pay. We have an asylum at Montreal, which has been destroyed by fire ; an asylum has been built for the Protestants to which we have made a loan ; and we shall probably have to make one also to the Catholics ; it is inevitable.

We have also other railways requiring subsidies ; we have institutions which are suffering, and we must maintain our night schools for the men and we must establish some also for the women. We must endeavour to improve the condition of the poor women who toil in our factories, and to give to them the chance of becoming good mothers of families and to educate themselves in order to educate their children. (Applause.) When our adversaries were in power they enacted that the railway companies should get thirty-five cents for each

acre of land granted to them, and this when the land should be sold and paid for. This places upon us obligations to the extent of at least three millions of dollars under this head.

But we must go further. We have here an abyss, the river, separating Levis from Quebec. You have seven railways ending here which cannot connect for want of a bridge. (Applause.) That bridge must be built. (Applause.)

Understand my words well, gentlemen. If, to carry out all these works a new loan is necessary, we shall contract it. (Prolonged applause.)

We shall not allow ourselves to be influenced or frightened by the howling of our adversaries. We shall do our duty in that case as in all others, and we shall not stop in the path of intelligent progress. (Applause.)

THE PROTESTANTS.

There are certain questions which are very delicate to handle. I will only mention one.

You are aware that when we came to power in 1887, we met with a great deal of difficulty in finding an English Protestant as a member of the Government. I will not discuss the causes of that difficulty. I will even go further and admit that the circumstances might to a certain extent justify my English Protestant fellow-citizens in hesitating before entering into an alliance with me. I sought and I believe I succeeded in solving the difficulty, in fulfilling one of the promises I had made when leader of the Opposition, by calling into the Ministry an Irish Catholic. (Applause.) Later, circumstances arose which led that Irish Catholic to give in his resignation, and which enabled me to invite an English Protestant to a seat in my Cabinet. I then overcame two great difficulties. I needed as a Minister a practical farmer, who would represent at the same time the Protestant element. I tendered to Hon. Mr. Rhodes (applause) a portfolio which combined these two conditions, and every one knows that his entry into the Cabinet was greeted with respect and satisfaction by three-fourths of the population. (Applause.)

THE IRISH CATHOLICS.

Since that time, I have not found it possible to meet that part of my programme relating to an Irish Catholic. I hope, however, gentlemen, that the day is not far distant, when I shall be in a position to do justice under this head to the Irish Catholics, as I am striving to do to all the other classes of our country. (Applause.)

THE NATIONAL-CONSERVATIVES.

Our adversaries, beaten in the discussion of the whole of our policy, unable to bear out their accusations, are endeavoring to sow discord in my political family. They say: "The National party is dying, because the two elements composing it are at open war, and the day is approaching, when the Liberals and the National-Conservatives will tear each other to pieces and separate violently."

This is a lie. I am glad to have it to state that the alliance between them is stronger and surer than ever. (Prolonged applause.) That alliance, which does not rest on the interest of men, but solely on the public interest, is strongly consolidated. I promised the National party that they would have two representatives in the Cabinet, and they have had them since the formation of my Government, and will have them as long as they offer me acceptable candidates. (Applause.) And the reason for this is very plain; I gave them my word and I have kept it; and they have given me their word and kept it. (Applause.)

It has been contended, gentlemen, that the National-Conservatives are exacting, that they are demanding more than their share. This is a slander, for I have never had more loyal or disinterested allies.

I rejoice to be able to pay this public tribute to them, and to state that every time I found it necessary to call upon them to make a sacrifice in the common interest, they did so and did it generously.

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

A single fact will prove this. Look at the Legislative Council! When I came to power we had only one vote in twenty-four; see the situation to-day? In that House we have a

majority of four. The National-Conservatives have generously consented to allow me to name Liberals, and the majority there to-day is a Liberal majority, which wipes out the old memories of the *Bleue* majority. (Applause.)

THE LIBERALS.

If the National-Conservatives have been loyal, if they have been faithful to the principle of the alliance which we formed in 1886, I must pay the same tribute to the Liberals.

With the exception of a few hot-heads, for there are such in all parties, and the Liberal party is not exempt from the general rule, the Liberals all over, the mass of the Liberals, have worked with me to maintain that alliance, and I declare here publicly, in this city of Quebec, where the party is perhaps stronger than anywhere else, that the Liberals of Montreal are as much in favor of that alliance as the Liberals of Quebec. (Applause.)

And the proof, gentlemen, is that all who have endeavored to break that alliance, or even advised its breaking, have been themselves broken by the popular verdict, and will be surely so on every occasion.

I beg of my Liberal friends to believe me when I say that our salvation is in the alliance, and that its rupture would be our loss.

The day on which I shall fail in my word towards my allies will be a fatal day, not for me, but for you. The flag which we have hoisted will be torn, and we shall go back to the dark days of the past, when the people, crushed under the yoke of unjust and tyrannical laws and by religious prejudices of all kinds, would not let the Liberals come to power, where they are to-day, with the National-Conservatives, thanks to that alliance.

Let us respect that alliance and we shall retain power. (Applause.)

OSTRACISM.

One word more and I shall close. Let me tell you that the times have greatly changed. Formerly, and the years are not so many either, the places were few in this province, where the Liberals could get a hearing. The press and public men declared everywhere that the Liberal party was dangerous and that its advent to power meant the destruction of religion and the triumph of bad principles. You, the veterans, have not yet forgotten those sad days, and I have not forgotten them either.

Before 1876 when we presented ourselves anywhere, we were not very well received. You have here as your Chairman, the Hon. Francois Langelier. (Applause). In 1871 he was a candidate in the County of Bagot. He had the same talents, the same respectability which he has to-day; he was as Catholic then as he is now, and yet he was crushed because he was a Liberal. And I have heard with my own ears, as others around me have heard, honest people say that Mr. Langelier was an infidel, a man whose principles were excessively dangerous, who never put his foot into a church, and that if the County of Bagot committed the folly of electing him, it would be the triumph of impiety in the Province. He has since been elected in the city of Quebec, and he can be elected anywhere. (Applause). Time was necessary to bring about what we are to-day noting.

The tables have been completely reversed; the impious party to-day is no longer the Liberal party but the *Bleu* party. (Applause and laughter). The men with bad principles are no longer the Liberals, but the men of Mr. Chapleau's school. (Laughter). And the consequence, gentlemen, is that it was not the Conservative party, although it had twenty years of power, which settled the Jesuit question, but a National Government. (Applause). And when formerly the Liberal leaders were denounced as misérables and repelled by a prejudiced, but infinitely respectable clergy, he who has the honor to address you to-day, who is the Prime Minister of this Province, leader of the National Government, and head of the National party, has received from the Sovereign Pontiff the highest honors which can be conferred upon a layman.

CONCLUSION.

I have the honor to speak at this moment to the authorized leaders of my party in the Quebec Division assembled together in our good old capital; and it seems to me that I should not conclude these observations without making a particular appeal, which I believe to be justifiable under the circumstances.

The present Government has neglected the interests of no part of the Province ; it has endeavored to do justice to all the cities, towns, villages, and rural districts.

But if there is any part of the Province in which the Government should be better received than elsewhere, it is Quebec. The Ministers have done everything to give justice to the population of this part of the country, and have never missed an occasion to be pleasing and useful to them.

It would be very difficult to point out a single demand made by the population of this district, which the Government has not favorably entertained. We have labored with activity and success to complete the railway system, whose construction was languishing and which was destined to bring here wealth and prosperity. And when that railway system was terminated, the Government, noting that the work was incomplete and that the river presented a great, an insurmountable obstacle to the prosperity of this capital, got liberal aid voted for the construction of the bridge which is so much desired, provided that the Federal and civic authorities do their share.

And while all the Ministerial members of the Montreal division were united on this question and held out a generous hand to the citizens of the old capital, the members of the Opposition, even those who represented this Quebec district, rejected the hand which was stretched out to them, and, following like slaves the example of their leader, voted in the name of the Conservative party against the bridge scheme.

To return these men to power would therefore be the assuring of the triumph of a policy hostile to Quebec ; on the other hand, to maintain the present Government, means the assuring of the triumph of a policy favorable to Quebec.

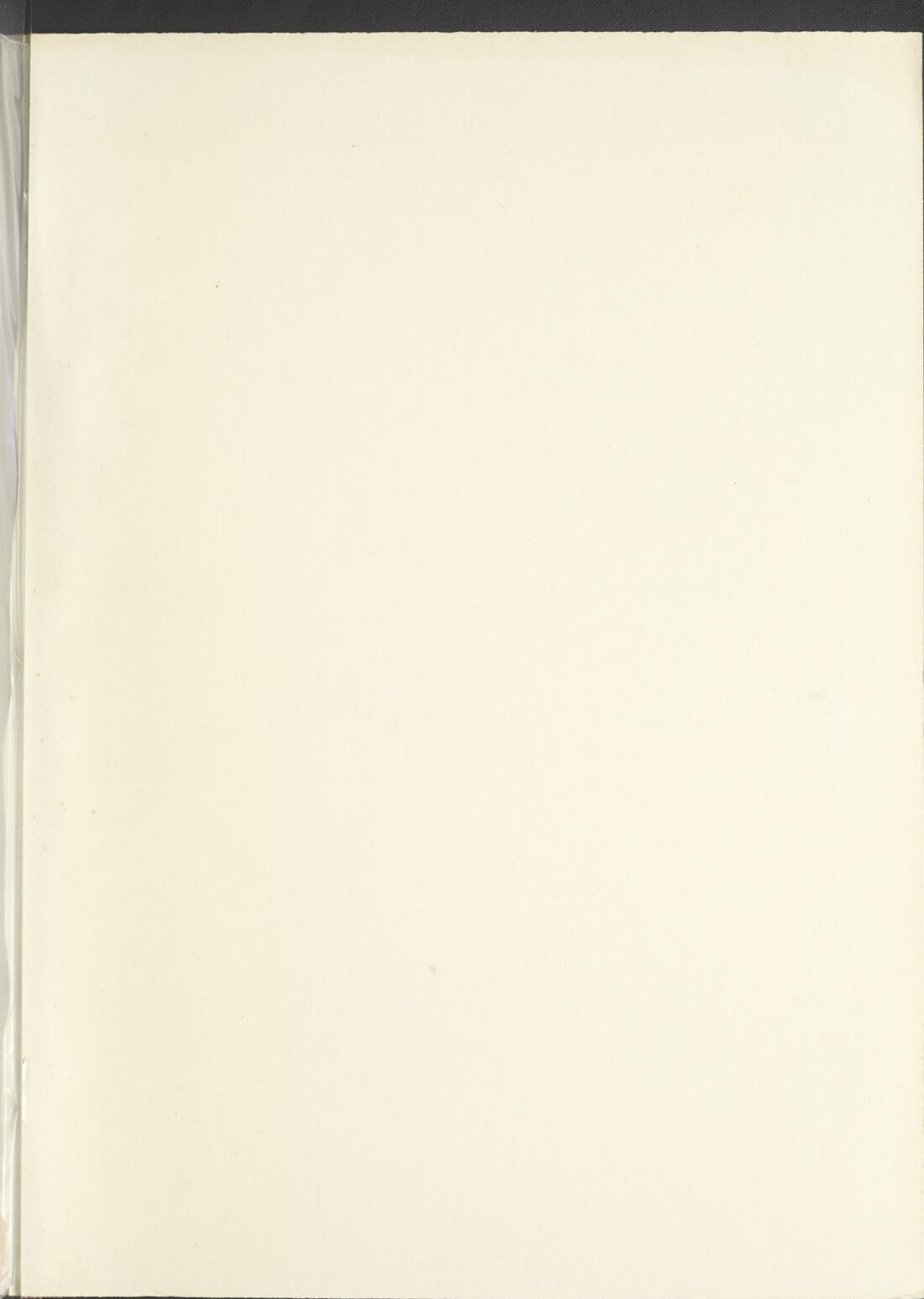
This is what I had to tell you, gentlemen, and while asking you to excuse the length of my remarks, let me express the hope that you will at once set to work like intelligent people and men of heart, in order to assure the triumph of your interests, of the party and of the Government which have taken them under their protection.

You have your future in your own hands ; you can sacrifice it, but you also can assure it.

The 17th June next is polling day, and I invite to the polls on that day all honest citizens, and if each one does his duty, the triumph will be signal ; we shall return proud conquerors, supported by the people, to continue the policy of progress, of conciliation, of pacification, and of reparation which we have pursued with your concurrence since 1887. (Prolonged applause, all present rising and cheering Mr. Mercier).

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