

those words in praise of the French Canadian people he was doing the work of a surgeon before the operation—injecting into the tissues an analgesic before he used the scalpel. The hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) says that because we have tried to invade provincial rights we have become a disrupted and disbanded party. But, for a moment or two let us examine what has happened on the other side. The moment the hon. leader of the opposition has placed his constitutional gun in position and the moment he has fired that gun it has been found to be a slate gun. It splits to pieces. The hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) mortally wounded; the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron) not quite so badly wounded. The list of wounded grows every day. The hon. member for North Toronto says that the weakness of the Czar of Russia is that he does not consult his people. Then, I might retort: What is the weakness of the hon. leader of the opposition? If it is a mistake for the Czar of Russia not to consult his people how much greater a mistake must it be for that hon. gentleman to turn his gun against his own lieutenants and his own regiment? But, we have not heard so far in this House from the hon. member for South York (Mr. Maclean). He will be coming some day and making a plea such as he made to-day in favour of provincial rights. That hon. gentleman succeeded in the not very remote past in making himself plainly understood on the question of provincial rights. It was in March, 1902. What did the hon. member for South York say? He was speaking in this House and he said:

Speaking of the provinces, I have not a moment's hesitation in saying that the result of provincial government in Canada has been detrimental to the progress of the country. I say that the interpretation of the law that has been given by the English Privy Council in regard to the distribution of rights as between the provinces and the federal power, has been against the interests of the country as a whole. That I regret. I agree with the hon. member for Lanark (Hon. Mr. Haggart) that some day we will have the whole jurisdiction in this parliament, and in some way we will work it out, and in some way we will increase the federal power and wipe out gradually the provincial power.

Who would believe that after what the hon. gentleman told us this afternoon? But, that is not all. He said something else. Here is what he said:

Yet we are told that there is no hope of progress, that the main thing is to uphold local rights. That is the doctrine of the Minister of Justice of Canada. I take issue with him there. The thing which the Conservative party of this country committed itself to was to build up a nation, with a unification of laws, if that was possible, and that this country should in some way try to recover the federal power which has been lost to the provinces in the past few years.

Mr. BELAND.

I ask my hon. friend frankly if he approves of that?

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. All of it.

Mr. BELAND. Well, if the hon. gentleman says he approves of that, I have nothing more to say. The hon. member for North Toronto did not pose as the champion of provincial rights in 1896. He assumed a different position then, but when he made his speech he said he would not do it again, and why? Because the will of the people and particularly the expression of the popular will in Quebec prevented him from doing it. Do you not see, Mr. Speaker, the skill and adroitness of that argument? If the hon. gentleman had only said that at the general election in 1896 the people of the province of Quebec went against his position, while we know better, we could have understood it, but he mentioned also the general elections of 1900 and 1904 as giving an expression of the people against the stand he took in this House on the question of provincial rights. He sought to escape the condemnation which was placed upon the Conservative party for their bad administration prior to that day. He affects to believe that in 1896, 1900 and 1904 the people voted for the upholding of provincial rights. He counts for nothing his own disastrous financial administration. He counts for nothing the scandals of his party during the 18 years of their regime. He counts for nothing the stagnation of affairs, the ineffective immigration policy and especially that in the general elections in 1900 and 1904 the people gave expression to the contentment which they felt under the progressive policy that our great leader has introduced into this country and which he has maintained.

The plea for provincial rights is a myth in this debate, cold political calculation is behind it. Men like the leader of the opposition, men like the member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) should rise to a higher level, for no one doubts in his heart that they do not know this plea is unfounded. Intended as it is to appeal strongly to the highest principles of autonomy, of liberty, and of equality; it will utterly fail in its results when the sound reasoning of the plain people of this country is applied to it. I have spoken longer than I expected, but I ask the House to bear with me a few moments longer. There have been very strong appeals made to religious and racial prejudices in this country. I will not refer to the circular sent broadcast by the member for East Grey; I will not refer to his speech in this House, though he uttered some very regrettable words, but I will deal for a moment and a moment only with the Huntingdon 'Gleaner' which he quoted. The Huntingdon 'Gleaner' I may say is a paper of minor importance in the province of Quebec; it is a purely local paper, and from the extracts that the member for East Grey read to the