

REPRESENTATIVE AND CONSTITUENTS.



Residents of a country in which the people rule as enfranchized citizens who are in the future to assist at the guidance of this fair country of ours, it behooves the young Canadian to understand well the relation that exists between a member of Parliament and his constituents, and the mutual obligation they owe to one another.

That the question is of vital importance is made evident from the fact that many and frequent are the instances, in which Members have been called to task, by their unreasonable constituents for voting on some question in the House of Commons, contrary to what they considered to be the proper side.

To expect a member to be fettered down to the opinions of constituents, and to oblige him to vote according to their every caprice, were the height of injustice, and gives plentiful assurance of the wrong reading of the principles underlying constitutional government by such constituents.

That it is a member's right, nay, duty, to vote according to his reason and conscience, rather than according to the opinions of his constituents, may be clearly proven from a three-fold standpoint: First, from the fact that he is a man, and not a mere voting machine, secondly from the fact that such a course of action is not antagonistic to the first principles of constitutional government, notwithstanding whatever may be adduced to the contrary, and thirdly that any other course than the one enunciated is utterly averse to the moral aspect of the question.

In the first place, a member presents himself for election, not merely as a man, but as a man among men, chosen from among the masses for his superior intelligence and judgment, for his greater experience in the affairs of public life, and for his superior ability in grappling successfully with those difficult questions that constantly arise in such a large and mixed community as ours.

As such therefore, his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, and above all his

enlightened conscience he cannot sacrifice to any man, nor to any set of men living. "These he does not derive from the hands of his constituents, nor from the law, nor from the constitution." These are a trust from Providence for the abuse of which he is strictly answerable. To his constituents a member owes his industry, his repose, his pleasure, his satisfaction, and, above all, his interest, but his judgment, never, because, were he to sacrifice that to his constituents, he would betray instead of serving them; moreover, it must always be borne in mind that, as a man, the member's first prerogative is reason, and that he cannot sacrifice or subject that reason to any one else without at the same time losing all right to being called a man. Finally, it must be remembered that by taking away a member's right to use his reason you likewise abstract his right to being called a man, and reduce him to that contemptible state of being, a voting machine, a weather-cock to be swayed hither and thither by every man's opinion. But a member comes before his constituents as a man, he lays down his principles as a man, and therefore as a man must he abide by them, and in so doing use his reason and his conscience in voting on public questions.

In the second place, that the course of action above enunciated is not antagonistic to the first principles of constitutional government, is evidenced from the following considerations.

A representative or constitutional government is one based on certain principles which may be styled popular; it is, in fact, a government in which the people hold the power of ruling, and exercise that power, through representatives chosen by them. In order to more fully appreciate the force of this argument, the peculiar state of government in Canada should be examined, owing to the division of the enfranchised citizens of this country into two great political parties, Conservatives and Liberals. The whole difference that exists between these two parties consists in the different views taken by the voters on the question of tariff, and in the policy regarding the tariff which in the opinion