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House of Commons Debates

SIXTH SESSION—SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

T. S. SPROULE, M.P.

ON THE

REMEDIAL ACT, MANITOBA

OTTAWA, THURSDAY, 5TH MARCH, 1896

Mr. SPROULE. In rising to continue this debate I must first express the regret which I experience in being obliged to differ with political friends with whom I have been associated for a long time and with whose lines of policy I have usually worked in hearty accord. It is a matter for regret amongst politicians on either side of the House when they find themselves out of accord with the political party with which they have worked many years, and you readily understand, Mr. Speaker, as I have no doubt the House does, that it is a very strong provocation which will induce any member of Parliament to go against his own political party. It is only the conscientious convictions which I hold on this question, and the interpretation which I put upon the constitution that we have heard so much about of late, and the understanding I have with regard to the rights of the majorities and minorities, that induce me to take the stand which I take to-night. But we owe a duty to our country as well as to our party, and there will sometimes come in most men's lives a time when they are obliged to leave party, and to stand for what they regard as the best interest of the country. As representatives of the people we are sent here, as far as possible to reflect the views, and the sentiments and the wishes of our constituents in whatever part of the country they live. In endeavouring to do that to-night, I am about to speak on the line which I

have mapped out. We are asked in connection with this debate, what duty we owe to our constituents? The hon. member for North Grey (Mr. Masson) my colleague, who spoke on this question last night, said that it is not usual for the Government to submit a question to the people by way of a plebiscite; but they go up and down the country and hold meetings; they watch the press of the country, and by that means endeavour to ascertain the sentiments of the people, and then to keep themselves in accord with those sentiments in discharging their duties as legislators or as a Government. Now, if that be the case, and I presume it is a fair exposition of the case, I wonder how hon gentlemen supporting the Government of the day, and composing the Government of the day, can justify their position upon this question, or pretend to say that they are in accord with the sentiment of the country. At the outset, I may say that I regret to find that the Government are, in my judgment, so much out of accord with the sentiment of the country. Why do I say so? How do I estimate or gauge public sentiment on this matter? I take the press of the country, from one end of it to the other, especially that press which represents the political party to which I belong, and which endeavours to give voice to their sentiments, to defend their policy, to support their conduct; and I say that the Government must regret to-day to find that there is scarcely an important Conser-