

turb now the rights and privileges granted by the parliament of Canada thirty years ago and enjoyed by the minority up to this time.

Now, I say that this is not a very important matter, but it is significant. I say that no government has a right—and it is poor politics, I think, for any government to assume that it has the right and act upon that assumption—in giving what purports to be official information from the records, to endeavour, by the means I have explained, to point out the argument and lead to a partisan conclusion with regard to a measure that has been introduced.

Now, I have no more to say on this occasion. These are just some thoughts which occur to us. We wish them to sink into the minds of hon. gentlemen opposite. We have no wish to dictate their policy; but we would fain give them something for reflection, for calm and, if possible, fruitful meditation. This is our contribution, made with the best of intention and in the best of spirit, and in the hope that it will contribute to the benefit of the hon. gentlemen opposite.

Mr. T. S. SPROULE (East Grey). In my judgment, we are face to face with a most extraordinary state of affairs in this parliament to-day. We propose to put through an important measure affecting the destinies of practically half a continent under the leadership of a government that has not a representative of that half continent among its members. Under constitutional government, as we understand it, and as it has been carried out, the cabinet is composed of heads who have received the endorsement of the people before they enter upon their work in that cabinet. And these cabinet ministers are chosen from the provinces according to the population or importance of those provinces. For instance, Ontario in the past has nearly always had five members in the cabinet, Quebec four, the maritime provinces at least three, one of whom was allowed for New Brunswick, another for Nova Scotia and, until recent years, one for Prince Edward Island. Thus every part of the Dominion was represented in the cabinet; and when important questions came up in which any portion of the country was particularly interested, its representatives in the cabinet were supposed to have influence in swaying the government in regard to that matter. That has hitherto been the case with regard to Ontario and Quebec, and either of those provinces would rebel to-day if an important measure affecting its interests were before parliament and it were deprived of its due proportion of representation in the cabinet. But to-day we have practically half a continent without representation in the cabinet, notwithstanding that an important measure is going through that vitally affects the interests of that half continent, and that will seal its fate for the future. The only representative in the cabinet of that part of the country has become so dissatisfied with the

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measure that he has publicly declared that it cannot receive his support, and, rather than remain in the cabinet and assume any responsibility for the measure, he has resigned. The government have not dared to put themselves in touch with that great section of the country by appointing another member in his place. Is it because of the unpopularity of the measure or because no one can be found who will take the responsibility of it, as an in-coming member of the cabinet would necessarily do? Or is it because of the dearth of public men from that country and the impossibility of finding any one in the ranks of the government supporters sufficiently intelligent to be a cabinet minister? It cannot be the latter, because the government has many supporters from the Northwest, some of whom would be a credit to a cabinet. We are driven, therefore, to conclude that it is because of the unpopularity of the measure, and because the government dare not ask the Governor General to appoint a new minister and, by an electoral contest, allow the people of the Northwest to express their opinion upon the measure.

If they did so, in that election which must take place, this measure would undoubtedly be discussed, every phase of it would be discussed before the people, and the people themselves would have an opportunity to express an opinion on it. The government are in the humiliating position to-day—I am justified in saying so in view of what has transpired—that they dare not risk their reputation by appointing a new Minister of the Interior and sending him back for reelection before this measure goes through. So that great country is not represented in this cabinet, that great country is without a representative to voice their views with regard to this important measure. Is that not constitutional government run mad? Is that according to the principles of the British constitution that we have heretofore carried out in the Dominion of Canada? I say it is the very reverse. The government are to-day in the humiliating position that they dare not put a minister into the cabinet and ask him to go to his constituents and get their endorsement of his appointment and of the measure that is before the House to-day. Now in view of this condition of affairs what ought the government to do? In my judgment they ought either at once to fill that position, and give the people an opportunity of endorsing the appointment, and let this measure be discussed by the people themselves, or they ought to withdraw the unpopular part of their measure; because, if I know anything about the sentiment of this country, especially of that part of the country which this measure will affect more than any other, it is I might say almost unanimous against the Bill, or at least the school clauses contained in this Bill that the right hon. gentleman has submitted to the House.