

Mr. DENIS: I doubt whether Mr. MacNeil is in a position to answer that. I know something about it. It was no test at all. The people of Montreal—and I take the responsibility for saying, for though I do not live in Montreal I am quite close to it—did not vote on proportional representation at all. They have made it a municipal political issue, and if you read the Montreal newspapers you will see that what I state is correct. I am absolutely confident that if the people of Montreal had had to pronounce themselves on the straight issue of proportional representation, they would be in favour of it. That is my idea. But the conditions in the city of Montreal have been mixed for a number of years. There has been a great deal of discontent from year to year, and representatives of the city have gone to the Quebec Legislature to have the city's charter amended. The issue became purely a municipal one, in which the principle of proportional representation embodied in one of the propositions submitted to the electors was absolutely lost sight of. It was a case of the people voting for one group of men against another group of men, or if I may so express myself they voted for a group of men in order to get rid of another group with whom they were dissatisfied. The vote in Montreal on the 16th of May was certainly not a vote on proportional representation, although the system was embodied in the questions which were submitted to the electorate. Anyone who will take the trouble to read the questions will see that they were very intricate. It was like giving a man one bill of fare that he has to accept all the way through, and another bill of fare that he has to accept all the way through. In the first bill of fare there were soup and fish and meat and everything and there was mention of proportional representation. In the other bill of fare there was something else in which proportional representation was not included, and the first bill of fare was discarded, but it was not because of proportional representation.

Hon. Mr. CALDER: What else was on that bill of fare?

Mr. DENIS: I cannot answer that off-hand. There were several things. I would not take the responsibility of giving the details.

Hon. Mr. CALDER: Were there any large principles involved?

Mr. DENIS: One principle, or one idea was the old system under which the city of Montreal was ruled some years ago of having a certain number of wards in which the local representative would be in contact with his electors. The other system was that representatives would be elected in three large constituencies, each selecting five members. If the system which has been defeated had been approved, the city of Montreal would have been divided into three constituencies, each constituency having five members. Then they would have proceeded along certain lines defined in the plan. I might also say that Mayor Martin who had control of the city of Montreal for some years came along and made it a personal affair.

Hon. Mr. CALDER: He decided which of those bills of fare he wanted?

Mr. DENIS: Yes, he chose his bill of fare, and according to some newspapers he went the limit in making use of prejudices. They discarded the group bill of fare.

Mr. HAROLD: Was not the most important thing involved proportional representation? Was that not the most important issue? The very fact which you mention, the difference between the single constituency representatives and the representatives of groups, would indicate that the issue was considered most important.

Mr. DENIS: Perhaps on the programme placed before the electors it may have been the issue, but it was not the issue which was defeated. How can we for a moment think that the voters of Montreal could decide the merits or demerits of proportional representation in a municipal election in which everything was entangled? Why, I remember that at the second meeting of this Committee there were members of Parliament who knew absolutely nothing about proportional representation. I do not blame them, and I am not saying that as a reflection upon anybody; it merely shows that the question is rather complicated, and how can you expect the people of Montreal to

[Mr. C. G. MacNeil.]