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Proportional Representation A Success

Proportional Representation which was successfully tried out in the recent Provincial election in Winnipeg, is already in force in Scotland, for the election of school boards, and in Ireland, for the election of local councils. In urging the system for the election of municipal councils in England, the Guardian says:—"If local bodies in England had power to adopt it (proportional representation) some of the more progressive, such as Leeds or Bradford or Manchester, would be sure to give it a trial, and once tried it would soon spread. The method of triennial elections is in itself a great improvement on the troublesome and inconclusive annual elections. The whole council would be returned together, the larger issues of policy could be raised in a way not now possible, and at the same time, as all parties would be represented according to their voting strength, there could be no sudden or complete turn-over in the representation, and the more experienced and better known councillors would be practically certain of election."

There is no doubt that wherever it has been tried the proportional system has proved an equitable form of representation; it being found impossible for any single political group or body or party to secure such an overwhelming majority as to completely eliminate less popular groups from representation on the governing body using the system. This is as it should be, for too much one sidedness in any public body, be it local or national, causes effeteness and stagnation on the one hand and "boss" government on the other hand—two evils that every progressive community or nation is desirous of eliminating.

One of the objections raised against the proportional system of election is that it is supposed to be too complicated for the mentality of the average voter. That this is not so is evidenced in the small number of spoiled ballots in the Winnipeg election, though the poll was heavy. As a matter of fact the system is simplicity itself to the intelligent voter, and no man or woman has a right to the franchise until he (or she) knows what he is voting for—and even though in the counting of the votes more work is involved by the polling clerks, the results obtained are worth the extra trouble and expense. As further evidence of its success we do not know of any instance where the community, having once tried proportional representation, has gone, or is desirous of going back to the old system, and it is to be hoped that before long every municipal council in Canada will be elected under the P. R. system.

LABOR AND THE COMMUNITY.

One of the principal subjects to be taken up at the Quebec Convention is the responsibility of the workers to the community. As is well known most of the ills of our municipal life may be traced to the apathy of the people, and in particular the apathy of the working classes for whose benefit principally municipal government is in existence. There is no country in the world where the citizens have such an opportunity as in Canada to put into effect the slogan "Government of the people by the people." The machinery is there; as a matter of fact the municipal machinery of this Dominion is the most complete of any country—every foot of Canadian soil is part of either a rural or urban municipality—but unless properly attended to the best machinery will break down. Organized labor as such has never taken up its share of civic responsibility, though it is keen to criticise when things go wrong.