

*Proportional Representation*

Prime Minister or any one on his behalf, and R. M. Rombough since May 1, 1921, on the subject of an investigation or proposed investigation into the Grain Trade.

### PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

#### MOTION BY MR. GOOD FOR ALTERNATIVE VOTE IN SINGLE-MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES

Mr. W. C. GOOD (Brant) moved:

Whereas the special committee on proportional representation appointed at the last session of the last parliament reported in favour of the adoption of the alternative vote method of election in all single member constituencies when more than two candidates were running for election, and also found much merit in the system of true proportional representation;

And whereas the last general election has fully demonstrated the many serious anomalies of the existing electoral system;

And whereas this matter was debated at the last session of the present parliament but did not reach a vote;

And whereas the government has promised to submit a Redistribution bill during the present session;

And whereas it is important that any desirable electoral reforms be adopted in conjunction with Redistribution;

Therefore be it Resolved,—

That in the opinion of this House the alternative vote method should be adopted for use in future elections for this House in all single member constituencies where more than two candidates are running for election.

He said: Mr. Speaker, last year when I brought this matter to the attention of the House I included both of the proposals for electoral reform in a single resolution. I think that a mistake was made in so doing, a mistake into which I fell, I presume, because the two questions had both been referred to a committee in the preceding parliament (1921) and were both investigated and reported on by that committee. This year, however, I am submitting the matter in two distinct resolutions. The first proposal was unanimously recommended by the parliamentary committee of 1921, and no objection was raised to it in the course of the debate last year. I take it, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that we might dispose of this resolution without further debate, and proceed to the consideration of proportional representation upon which I presume there is a greater difference of opinion.

However, before putting the question I deem it advisable—in view of the fact that there may be some here who were not in the House last year when the matter was discussed and have not read the debate in Hansard—to explain very briefly the meaning of the expression “the alternative vote method”. But before doing that let me point out, as I did last year, something of the need for this reform. In the Ontario elections of 1919, out of 111 contests there were 74 three-, four-, or five-cornered contests. In the Dominion elections of 1921 out of 235 contests there were

[Mr. Stevens.]

140 three-, four-, or five-cornered contests. I have not the figures as to the number of three-, four-, or five-cornered contests in the last British elections in 1922, but 178 were elected by a minority vote.

Now, Mr. Speaker, having thus pointed out very briefly the needs of the situation may I explain three points in connection with the system itself.

First, as to the ballot. The ballot under the new method would be identical with the ballot that we are accustomed to use at the present time. Second, with respect to the duties of the elector. Instead of placing a cross opposite the name of the candidate whom the elector wishes to vote for, the elector places the figure 1 opposite his first choice, the figure 2 opposite his second choice—if he so desires—the figure 3 opposite his third choice, and so on to any extent to which he may desire to go. In case of three candidates running it would be sufficient, of course, for any elector to mark on the ballot paper his first and second choices, to mark them by the figures 1 and 2. In the case of four candidates, he would be invited to place the figures 1, 2 and 3 opposite his first, second and third choices.

In the third place, in respect to the count. The candidate who has the lowest number of votes is declared out of the running, and his votes are distributed among the remaining candidates according to the preferences expressed thereon by the elector. The process is simplicity itself, and the result is that we are quite sure that every candidate who is elected is chosen by a clear majority over all.

Mr. HOCKEN: May I ask whether, in the event of an elector only marking his first choice, that would be a good ballot?

Mr. GOOD: Yes, I intended to mention that point. In answer to the hon. gentleman from West Toronto I may say that if an elector marks nothing on the ballot, of course the ballot is useless; but if the elector marks his first choice, either with the figure 1 or with an X, that ballot is perfectly good and it operates as our ballot does at the present time. But the elector's wishes in that event are impossible to discover in case his first choice comes lowest in the first count, or should be eliminated later in the count. The elector is, therefore, requested to put the figure 1 opposite his first choice, and he is invited, if he has any preferences, to express them on the ballot paper. If he does not choose to exercise the right which he has, then, of course, we cannot help it, he simply does what he does now; but the new method