

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

COMMITTEE ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

THURSDAY, April 14, 1921.

The Special Committee appointed to consider the subject of Proportional Representation and the subject of the single transferable or preferential vote, and the desirability of the application of one or the other or both to elections to the House of Commons of Canada, met at 11 a.m., the Chairman, Mr. Sexsmith, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN: We have Mr. Ronald H. Hooper here this morning. I understand, to explain and demonstrate the system of proportional representation, and we would be very glad to hear him.

Hon. Mr. CALDER: This morning I would suggest that as quite a number of members of the committee are absent Mr. Hooper just give us a general outline without going into minor details, so that he would not have to go over the whole thing twice.

Mr. HOOPER: I came prepared to speak for perhaps an hour giving the arguments of those who believe in the necessity for this electoral reform and to explain in detail the mechanism and the probable effects of it and how it would remedy the anomalies of the present system, and to deal with certain specific questions which might be asked me, such as the formation of groups and other questions of that character. I am not attempting to make a case for proportional representation now, but merely to explain it. I am not now offering an argument for the adoption of proportional representation; that is another matter. I think we all have a very good idea about the evils of the present system. Admitting for the moment that the evils of the present system of single member constituency elections are serious, I claim the remedy is well within our reach. In order to secure a proper representation in parliament of the various parties within the country, and in order to secure the highest type of parliament where the members may represent the opinions of people rather than acres, mental rather than geographical constituencies, it will be necessary to make but two changes of a comparatively simple and practicable nature in our electoral machinery. First, we should abolish the single member constituencies and substitute in their place much larger electoral districts electing several members.

Mr. CURRIE: Why?

Mr. HOOPER: I will explain that. Instead of dividing a city like Toronto, for example, into a number of single member constituencies, we should throw them all in together and elect the representatives for Toronto from the city at large.

By Mr. Currie:

Q. That is what we did fifty years ago, and we found that we had to come down to single member constituencies.—A. I can easily explain that. If we used the "Block Vote" system, that is, allow each elector to mark an X on the ballot paper against as many candidates as there are representatives to be elected, it would be possible as in the city of Victoria at the last British Columbia provincial elections, for a bare majority of electors to elect all the candidates leaving minorities entirely unrepresented, which would certainly be no improvement over the present system. On the other hand, if we allowed each elector one rigid vote only, it might frequently happen that a party,

[Mr. Ronald H. Hooper.]