

*Proportional Representation*

country constituency in British Columbia? It cannot be gainsaid that it is desirable and in the public interest that the candidate should endeavour to meet at least a number of the constituents and explain his point of view on the issues before the country at the time, and also that the electors should have an opportunity of seeing the different men who are seeking their support. But how will that be possible with a multi-membered constituency of five seats such as we would have in the country districts of British Columbia? It would take at least two years to canvass such a constituency in that way.

I can see further vast possibilities of trouble after the wretched man had been elected. For myself I would hate to be bracketed with four other members in such a constituency. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that three of those members were not in the habit of paying attention to their correspondence—a failing that we often see in members, at least, until the next election comes round. What would be the fate of the unhappy man who had got the reputation of attending to his business and who had all the correspondence to answer emanating from such a multi-membered constituency? It would not be fair to him, to his colleagues, or to the public. I think the hon. member who moves the resolution has lost sight of that, and in my opinion he should introduce an amendment, if he wishes the motion to pass, providing that such multi-membered constituencies shall be urban in their character.

Mr. SPEAKER: If no other hon. member rises now, the mover will close the debate

Mr. R. K. ANDERSON (Halton): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to the address of the hon. member for Brant (Mr. Good) on the subject of proportional representation. I have heard this subject discussed in the House on two previous occasions, in 1921 and in 1922, and so far as I am concerned I still hold the view that proportional representation is not in the best interests of parliamentary institutions in this country. The hon. member for Brant did not give us any exposition of how true proportional representation might be worked out; nor has any other hon. member done so.

I have before me a pamphlet prepared by the exponents of proportional representation which deals with one or two elections carried out under that system, and which refers particularly to the single transferable vote in multi-membered constituencies. In the election held in the city of Winnipeg in 1920 under the system of proportional representation, labour polled 20,167 votes, or 42.5 per

[Mr. Neill.]

cent of the total vote polled, getting only four seats. The Liberals polled 14,423 votes, or 30.4 per cent of the total vote, giving them four representatives. The Conservatives polled 6,475 votes, or 13.4 of the total, getting two members. The Independents, with 6,362 votes, having 13.4 per cent of the popular vote, received no representation whatever. It is supposed that under this system all parties appealing for the suffrages of the people will get proportional representation, yet in the Winnipeg election, the Independent party received no representation at all, while the Conservatives, with the same amount of popular vote, received two members; the Labour party, having 42 per cent of the total vote, received four representatives, and the Liberal party, with 30 per cent of the total vote, also received four.

Consequently, it will be seen that proportional representation does not quite work out as its advocates say, that is, it does not always give proportional representation to the various parties that are appealing for the suffrages of the people. Proportional representation, if it means anything, means that it will give representation in the House of Commons, or in municipal government, to all the parties that have candidates before the public. It therefore means the breaking up of the party system, and the substitution for it of the group system of government. That is the intention of the principle; it cannot be anything else; and that is how it works out in practice. It is intended to give representation in our government and in municipal affairs to the minorities among the people. It is for that purpose, and for no other purpose. Consequently, its purpose is to disrupt the present condition of affairs, to do away with our democratic system, for democracy means the rule of the majority. It would do away with the rule of the majority, and give a system of rule to minorities and to group government; and we know what group government is. We have one in the province of Ontario at the present time, although it was not put in power under the proportional representation system.

In a pamphlet that has been submitted by the exponents of proportional representation, a copy of which has been handed me by the committee here in Ottawa, I find the result of a municipal vote in the town of Sligo in Ireland, and this is given for the purpose of proving that proportional representation gives proportional representation to the parties that are putting up candidates for election. In that vote, taken in 1919 in the town of Sligo—and I point this out in