

experience has not been entirely satisfactory. I know that failure to vote may be penalized by disfranchisement or otherwise. My preference is to have everything done that is possible to get everyone on the list, and to try to encourage people to exercise the franchise. What is done by the political parties? At Kingston, where elections are run very efficiently, every voter gets a post card from the candidates of the old parties, and possibly also from the C.C.F., telling him or her where to vote on election day.

Why cannot some system be adopted whereby every person entitled to vote shall be enabled to vote? I know that courts of revision exist for this purpose, but often they are not properly advertised. If during the recent provincial elections in Ontario you had looked, as I did, through the newspapers, you would have found that some returning officers had large advertisements with big type drawing the attention of voters to the fact that they must get themselves on the list, or, if not already on it, that they should attend the sittings of the revising officers and see to it that their names were included. But other returning officers used the very minimum of space to advise voters when sittings of the revising officers were to take place, and often the notices were overlooked.

These, it seems to me that are some of the reasons why many people are not voting, and everything possible should be done to correct the situation.

Hon. ARTHUR W. ROEBUCK: Honourable senators, I too will take just a moment. I could not allow this occasion to pass without expressing some disappointment in this bill, and joining with the leader of the opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) in the hope that a further review of the Act will take place at the next session of parliament.

The bill is largely a matter of detail, and its more or less unimportant, routine amendments to the various sections, which are all right in their own way, no doubt required a good deal of time, effort and application. But I should like to see the committee reconstituted fairly early next session, so that without having all these details in its hands it could actually attack some of the vital problems in our electoral system.

I join with the honourable senator from Churchill (Hon. Mr. Crerar), as I so frequently do, in expressing pleasure at the wiping out of the discrimination against the Japanese. I also want to join with the leader of the opposition in what he has said about the transferable vote. I think his argument is unassailable, but I feel that he failed to attack

the real difficulty: that governments elected under the present system do not favour a change.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. ROEBUCK: Having achieved success by this jug-handled, unscientific, undemocratic and most unfair method, they have successively hesitated to make a change in the system that was so satisfactory to them.

Hon. Mr. EULER: Let well enough alone!

Hon. Mr. ROEBUCK: My honourable friend's party in its present position is enthusiastic about reform in systems of voting; but I am fairly confident that were the Conservatives to take office under the present system, they would be just as reactionary and reluctant to change as the present government or any previous government has been.

The only thing upon which I can base a hope that a government in office—be it the present one or some successor—will really assail this problem, is the weight of public opinion aroused by the realization that, should this system continue in this country, we run the risk of having a minority government.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. ROEBUCK: I am a democrat and a liberal, and I am satisfied to abide by any government, even a Conservative government, if it is elected by the majority of the people. I have enough confidence in the electors of this Dominion to feel sure that any majority government would be a reasonably wise one. What I fear is that a minority government, elected by less than fifty per cent, possibly one-third, of our electors, would impose their will upon the majority of Canadians.

The only way I know of avoiding such a disaster with all its possible implications is to reform our system of voting. We can do so, not by the proportional representation method, which is not a political possibility at the moment, but by assuring that every representative who reaches parliament shall have a majority vote behind him. The situation as respects minority elections is getting worse with the growth and increasing powers of third parties, and with the divergences of political philosophy that are accepted and worked on by these parties.

As to a compulsory system, I do not believe in forcing anyone to vote. The only person I would disfranchise would be someone not interested in voting. I am in favour of the electors going to the polls and casting their ballots as a civic duty. Neglect of the people to go to the polls throws a tremendous burden