

The allegation has been made that proportional representation is un-British. I happened to hear this statement at a meeting of the Social Service Council of Canada a short time ago in the Chateau Laurier, and Mr. Gisborne, who was Parliamentary Counsel for many years, combatted the idea very definitely and emphatically on that occasion. I fancy the evidence which I have already given as to the action being taken in Great Britain, and the fact that the Australasian countries are generally committed to this reform, constitute a pretty effective rejoinder to that criticism. I have here a certified copy of an interview that took place in Saskatoon not long ago. The date of the letter enclosing the certified copy is December 4. I read as follows:

"The proportional representation single transferable vote has undoubtedly proved a great success in Saskatoon," says Mr. M. C. Tomlinson, city clerk. "First it has stimulated greater interest in the election. Last year there was practically 5,000 votes polled, while the highest number at any previous election was 3,000.

Secondly, it was found that there were fewer spoiled ballots under this system than under the old.

Prior to the election last year we heard on all sides that numerous ballots would be spoiled by the voters, chiefly due to the western cities having a large foreign population.

This was not the case. The percentage of rejected ballot papers under the P.R. system was actually lower than was the case with the X-marked ballot, when voters were called upon to mark their ballot papers for more than one candidate. This would lead one to believe that the P.R. system is easier for the elector than the old.

Although this was the city's first election under the P.R. system, the carrying out of the voters' wishes as expressed on the ballots proved to be a very simple process.

The new system has won favour with the city council, the press, and the public. There are a few objectors, of course, but they are very few."

I have here a copy of a letter from the Secretary of the British Proportional Representation Society, Mr. Humphreys, to the secretary of the Canadian society, in which he says in part:

P.R. has never been so much discussed in England as it has since our recent general election.

I do not know that at the present juncture I should say anything further. I should be very glad indeed to hear any further objections that can be made to the proportional representation system, and I shall do my best to meet those objections when my turn comes.

Mr. LADNER: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the hon. member who proposes this motion has taken a great deal of interest in the subject and is thoroughly informed with regard to it. I wish to put to him a few questions concerning phases of the subject with which he did not deal, at least so far as I could hear him.

The first question is: Does the hon. member not distinguish between municipal government and its operations, on the one hand, and the federal system of government, or government by majority rule and cabinet responsibility, on the other hand? The second question is: Does he consider that the application of proportional representation to our system of government will have the effect of dissipating cabinet unity and cabinet responsibility to the House?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member who proposes the resolution stated in his last sentence that he would like to hear from other hon. members who have objections to offer or suggestions to make regarding the subject matter of his motion. If he speaks now, that will close the debate. I think some other hon. members are desirous of speaking on the resolution; and if that is the case they must do so before the proposer of the motion replies and thus closes the debate.

Mr. GOOD: I shall be pleased to answer the question later or now, whatever is the desire of hon. members.

Mr. A. W. NEILL (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, while I am heartily in sympathy with the last resolution that we passed regarding the alternative vote, I would like to point out one effect of the present resolution. The mover calls upon the government to constitute one or more multi-membered constituencies. I would suggest that the word "urban" should be put in there; otherwise this is what would happen: The hon. mover of the resolution suggested that a multi-membered constituency might appropriately consist of five ordinary constituencies. In British Columbia that might include the constituencies of Skeena, Cariboo, Comox-Alberni, Yale and, we will say, East Kootenay, constituting, I should say roughly, seventy-five per cent of British Columbia. I do not think that any of the members for the districts I have mentioned would contradict me when I say that to make an ordinary canvass—not from house to house, but by the holding of meetings at which two or three score of people could be got together—six months might reasonably be required in respect of any one of these constituencies. I am quite sure that the members for Cariboo and Skeena will bear me out in that; I myself can speak for Comox-Alberni. Can one conceive of the work that would be imposed on a candidate—especially a new candidate, because he would be unknown—in attempting a personal canvass of five constituencies the size of those represented by the ordinary