

Mr. TALBOT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Is it according to the rules of the House that the hon. gentleman should read his speech?

Mr. MONK. My object in quoting largely from my notes, Mr. Speaker, is to make my observations as short as possible but I will endeavour to conform to what is a very wise rule of the House. It has been claimed that our popular assemblies, in which is lodged the direction and control of the nation's legislative and administrative powers do not now reflect the opinions, the desires or the aspirations of the electorate at large. It is claimed that the representation which we now have in parliament is only a partial one, that in reality it is a distortion, that a very large number of the electors are quite unrepresented in the council of the nation, and that the council of the nation, or parliament, ought to be an exact mirror of public opinion, and of the desires, the aspirations and the will of the people generally. The claim is that the direction of public affairs is in this manner very frequently placed in the hands of men who are all-powerful, and yet who represent only a bare majority, very often even only a minority of the electorate at large, and that the rest of the qualified electors have no voice, no control whatever, over the affairs of the country. The final result of this situation is that the unrepresented are not to-day in a very different condition from the unfortunate condition in which were the villains in the olden times. They were deprived of power; they had no voice in the affairs of the country; they were attached to the glebe; they were absolutely ignored. To-day those who are thus unrepresented are, if I may use the expression, the slaves of the urn instead of being as the villains were formerly. Under the outward signs of liberty they have not in reality a greatly improved position over that of the unfortunate men of bygone times. Now, what is the cause of this state of affairs, and of the consequent abuses which have so greatly, within the past twenty or twenty-five years, brought representative institutions into disrepute and created, what every one I think has noticed, a want of interest in the administration of public affairs and in the elections which have for their object the production in parliament of a faithful reflection of public opinion throughout the country? There has resulted, as every body knows, not only a want of interest, but a kind of void between parliament, between the representative assembly, between the council, when one reverts to municipal affairs, and the electorate from which these assemblies emanate; and the real reason for that regrettable state of affairs can be found in our greatly deficient system of representation. The principle which ought to underlie the creation of a representative assem-

Mr. MONK.

bly surely is this, that it should afford representation not merely to a part but to the whole of the electorate; otherwise of course it loses its representative character. If the powers, legislative, administrative, executive, are unlimited, and if those powers are wielded by one-half, or one-half plus one, of the electorate, the other half less one of the electorate, who have no voice or control whatever in the country's affairs, are quite powerless; so that it is impossible to say that such an assembly is really and truly a faithful reflection of the nation that has called it into existence. Even admitting the necessity of this crude system of a bare majority which has prevailed hitherto, and which is repugnant to the idea of a truly representative body, as the founders of our representative institutions conceived that body to be, matters become very much worse when we find, as we often do, that instead of a majority, even a bare majority, being in power and ruling the people, as a matter of fact, through the numberless deformations of our electoral system, the majority in the representative body does not as a matter of fact represent the majority of the electorate, but in fact represents a minority. In effect, the country is governed by a minority, sometimes quite a considerable minority, of the electorate, who rule the majority, and the majority are left without any recourse whatever. Such instances are by no means rare. Let me give one from a foreign country. In the French Chamber of 1881, 1885 and 1889, the ruling party in parliament represented a minority of the electors who had actually voted and a very feeble minority of the electorate, if one takes into consideration those who abstained from voting at all. In numerous cases, not only in France, but in our own country, a considerable portion of the electors cannot be said to be represented since they have not cast their ballots. In France, in the cases which I have mentioned, the reality was in direct violation of the principle that in a democracy the laws must emanate from all the nation, or at any rate from the majority of the representatives of every part of the nation. In theory our legislation must be sanctioned by all our citizens or a majority of their representatives. In England electoral reform is one of the burning questions of the day. To show that the strange anomaly I have mentioned is not confined to France, I shall, with the permission of the House, quote briefly from an article which appeared in the 'Westminster Review' of September, 1907, on proportional representation. The writer describes the situation in England in a fair and forcible manner. He says:

Commencing with the general election in 1874, we find, according to Lord Avebury's figures, the Tories in an actual majority of