

all-important to realize that the business of voting is a serious responsibility. One of the most dangerous trends affecting our whole democratic system is the lighthearted and even ignorant fashion in which many people approach that responsibility. I venture to say that if on an election day in this city one could call all the people passing up and down Sparks street into a room and ask them some simple questions to test their knowledge as to their qualifications to vote, one would find that many of them really would not know what they were doing. That situation is not the fault of society, because the people have newspapers and every opportunity to inform themselves. But they fail to do so because of their complete lack of interest in public matters. May I say that one does not find that lack of interest on the part of the people in such countries as Poland and Czechoslovakia. They know what the right of the free ballot means.

I am not raising this point to suggest any debarring of voting, but I do think that the exercise of the franchise is one of our most important privileges. At the risk of criticism, I make the further observation that we have at times too lightly extended the franchise to people not fully qualified to discharge the duties of citizenship. I do not know just how it can be remedied.

I am opposed to proportional representation because I do not think it would add to the effectiveness of our electoral machinery. I confess that there was a time in my salad-days when I thought that proportional representation was a good thing. But that was a time when my experience of life was not what it is today, and when beautiful theories had a firmer grip on my imagination than they have at the moment. I have a good deal of sympathy for the young enthusiasts who would reform the world all at once. I, too, once entertained these notions. But if they are honest intellectually and inform themselves intelligently, I have no doubt that time will modify their views.

On the question of the transferable vote, I think a solid argument can be made in favour of it. My honourable friend from Cariboo (Hon. Mr. Turgeon) shakes his head. I am not thinking of it in a partisan way; the question must be considered a little above that level. The single transferable vote when carried out fully and honestly, means that the member elected for a constituency is the final choice of a majority of the voters.

This is the way it operates. For instance, there may be three candidates, A, B and C. On the first count A gets a majority over B and over C but does not get a majority of all

the votes cast. C being the lowest of the three, is eliminated. The second choices on the ballots for C then become first choices for A and for B. If B gets sufficiently more choices than A to outdistance A in the total vote each receives, he then becomes the majority representative of the people of the constituency.

Is there anything undemocratic about that? Is that not really a true basis for expression in the choice of a representative? If we throw aside party finagling in an attempt to score a few votes here and there, and look at it on the basis which I think it should be considered upon, the argument is all in favour of the single transferable vote.

I apologize to honourable senators for taking up so much time of the house. When the debate opened this afternoon I had no intention of speaking, but as it developed I felt the urge to say something. If I have tired you I apologize.

Hon. C. C. BALLANTYNE: Honourable senators, I will take but a few minutes of the time of this chamber.

A great deal has been said by the honourable senator for Cariboo (Hon. Mr. Turgeon) about getting people out to vote, but I did not hear him say anything about regulations that would prevent people from voting. The constituency I represented in another place is famed for impersonation or, as some call it, "telegraphing."

Hon. Mr. HUGESSEN: It was famous.

Hon. Mr. BALLANTYNE: A candidate would never get elected in that constituency unless he did what I and others were forced to do. I had inspectors for each division, eighty in all, keep a card index system of every voter—that was before women voted—containing a description of each voter, the colour of his hair and his eyes, his religion, his telephone number and where he worked. When a man came to the poll and said he was Mr. Jones, the scrutineers would look at Mr. Jones' card, and if the voter did not fit the description he would have to be sworn.

Hon. Mr. LACASSE: Or finger-printed.

Hon. Mr. BALLANTYNE: They were very clever. Maybe conditions are not so bad now as they were thirty years ago.

Hon. Mr. HOWARD: Oh, no; we have improved.

Hon. Mr. BALLANTYNE: In those days a man who intended to impersonate a blacksmith would be dressed as one; if he wanted to pass as a lawyer for the purpose of "telegraphing" his vote, he would present the distinguished appearance of all legal gentlemen.