

hear him state now that Lord Bryce did not oppose proportional representation. Since the matter was raised last year and since I was afraid that a wrong impression had been given as to Lord Bryce's position, I wished to read some remarks which Lord Bryce made in a debate on the Representation of the People Bill in the House of Lords in England, on 22 January, 1918:

My noble friend, Lord Harcourt, poured some scorn upon the whole plan of proportional representation as if it was a fad confined to certain persons in this country. It is the fact that over nearly all the free countries at this moment men's minds are very much exercised upon this question of proportional representation. There is hardly any considerable country popularly governed which has not been confronted with the very same difficulty which proportional representation is meant to meet as we are trying to grapple with here. The experiment is being tried in an additional number of countries almost every year. New Zealand has just adopted it. I was in Tasmania a few years ago and I can tell my noble friend Lord Harcourt that the opinion of Tasmania was in favour of the plan which has been adopted, and that I did not hear of any desire to depart from it. The same thing is true about other countries which I will not enumerate. And the reason is this, that conditions have changed. My noble friend quoted the opinion of Lord Beaconsfield, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Bright. It is thirty-eight years since Lord Beaconsfield died. Our politics and our party system have changed completely. We have now got three or four parties and we cannot tell whether the process of dividing up parties, which has gone so far in some countries, may not fall upon us also. Under conditions so different it has surely become desirable to find new expedients for meeting the evils which have arisen. I think these considerations justify my noble friend in the proposal he has made, a proposal which of course is capable of modification, which need not be extended to that amplitude which he indicated, but which can well be adopted in more modest form, and which, I think, in one form or another, well deserves to be tried.

Just in that connection I may say that after investigating this whole question in 1909 and 1910, the British parliament appointed a Speaker's Conference in 1916, which reported in 1917. Lord Bryce was a member of that committee, and I might here refer briefly to the recommendations made by that Speaker's Conference in Great Britain in 1917. They are as follows:

A parliamentary borough which may be entitled on a basis of population to return three or more members shall be a single constituency; provided that a constituency entitled to return more than five members shall be divided into two or more constituencies, each returning not less than three, nor more than five members. The election in any such constituency shall be held on the principle of proportional representation and each elector shall have one transferable vote.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the recommendation with respect to proportional representation. At the same time, with reference to those constituencies which would not be thus grouped, the conference made this recommendation:

At any election in a single member constituency where there are more than two candidates, the election

shall be held on the system of voting known as the alternative vote.

So I think we may conclude that Lord Bryce was distinctly in favour, not only of the alternative vote, but of proportional representation, and I do not know of any man who was better qualified to express an opinion on a question of that sort than the late Lord Bryce.

I should like also, to refer to what the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) said in the debate of last year on this subject. His remarks will be found on page 1655 of Hansard. He said:

In a word, Mr. Speaker, I find myself in entire sympathy with the resolution, and, so far as an individual member has voice in the House, would like to express myself as supporting it as it stands. In this matter, the government would wish to be governed by the opinion of the House, and if the House approves the resolution the government will do all in its power to give effect to it as opportunity affords.

Answering a question asked at that time by the hon. member for Vancouver South, the Prime Minister said:

I confess that as I study the question more and more, it is my view that instead of adding to the number of groups in the House, the adoption of what is proposed here might tend to limit the groups.

And so on. I should like also to refer, just in passing, to a remark which the Prime Minister made the other day when he was introducing the Redistribution bill. He spoke about the bitterness that was aroused one or two decades ago in connection with the process of gerrymandering. I would suggest that there is no possibility of gerrymandering being effective under proportional representation, and that is a consideration which, I think, we ought to bear in mind.

I have not much more to add at this time. No doubt a good many objections will be raised, and I shall have an opportunity of replying a little later on. But there is some additional information which we have now, which we did not have when this matter was debated last May. I would just briefly call the attention of the House to some of the information which we have received since that time. In the first place, I would point to the adoption of proportional representation in Edmonton on 11th December last by a vote of 5,664 to 3,075. The Edmonton Journal of the next day, December 12, comments on the election as follows:

Proportional representation was not defeated yesterday in a single polling sub-division and received the approval of the citizens by practically a two to one vote.

It seldom happens that a political reform is so emphatically endorsed when first submitted. Those who have watched its operation elsewhere can have no doubt that it will realize all that is hoped for from it in the improvement of the character of our city government.