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PROPORTIONAL VOTING — IN — MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

BY R. T.

An effective system of voting is the foundation of good municipal government. Our municipal institutions are based on the vote of the people, and if the method of taking that vote is defective, the resulting government must be defective also. You cannot get good results from poor machinery or from bad methods. To put it more specifically, the arrangement or constitution of electoral districts, and the system or method of marking and counting the ballots, have more to do with the quality of municipal government than any other factor; because upon these things depends the kind of men you elect.

Let us then examine critically the system of voting now used in Canada. Is it in harmony with the underlying principles of representative institutions? Or is its machinery so defective as to cause misrepresentation and non-representation of the people? Does it tend to promote or to prevent the election of the right men?

ELECTING A MAYOR OR REEVE.

We will begin with the election of the presiding officer of the municipality. Two principles of representative government stand out prominently here:

1. There should be the utmost freedom of choice in nominating candidates.
2. The man who is elected should have a clear majority of the votes cast.

No one will dispute the correctness of these two principles. Yet they are continually set at naught in the elections of mayors and reeves under the present system.

For the last two years—1899 and 1900—Toronto has had a "minority Mayor;" and it is a common occurrence, when three or more candidates are running, that the successful can-

didate gets a minority of the votes cast. This is simply the result of defective methods. It is quite practicable to use a system that will give a clear majority at one balloting, no matter how many candidates.

The other serious disadvantage of the present method is that it restricts the choice of candidates. When two fairly strong men are nominated, others dislike to enter the field, because they might injure the chances of one or the other of the contestants by cutting into his vote, and because many electors will not vote for a man, however good, unless they think he is one of the strongest candidates.

THE BETTER WAY.

Here is a method that will carry out the two principles mentioned, and will remedy the evils complained of. It is an adaptation of the Hare-Spence system of Proportional Representation:

Suppose that our old friends Smith, Brown, Jones and Robinson are running for a city mayoralty. Under the improved system, each voter marks his ballot for all the candidates in the order of his choice, with the figures 1, 2, 3, 4. For instance, take a voter who wants Smith to be elected and who thinks Robinson the most objectionable of the candidates, and who prefers Brown to Jones. That voter will mark his ballot thus:

Brown	2
Jones	3
Robinson	4
Smith	1

By thus marking his ballot, the voter practically says: Smith is my first choice, and I want my ballot to count for Smith if possible. But if Smith has so few votes that he cannot