

suits made from handwoven material. This specific accomplishment is a direct result of a Youth Training Course that was given near the Indian reservation area.

One of the striking features of rural handicraft courses is the magnificent co-operative spirit displayed by all. This spirit of support and assistance is manifested, not only by direct participants in the course but very definitely by persons who could derive no personal material benefit from them. All services offered are voluntary. It can be stated that, in general, the active support of the people grows steadily as they see for themselves the changes taking place in individuals, in groups and in the standard of community life. It is abundant proof that such schools, surrounded and supported by the life of the neighborhood, becomes a community group wherein students,

teachers, and adults live together. It is a type of training where right habits of thought and action are moulded and where a wholesome attitude towards life is created. It is done by actually *living* and *doing* worthwhile things in a worthwhile way.

It is my belief, that if country life is to reach its highest point of satisfaction, it will be found through a recovery of some of the values that have been lost in the transition from the old fashioned farm home to the modern farm where everything that is raised is standardized with the thought of selling it on the market. Grading, standardizing, and limiting production is perhaps essential for both producer and consumer, but some day it is hoped that every farmer and his family will come to realize that there are certain choice and rare things which they can have for themselves which no city person, whatever his wealth can secure.

## Proportional Representation

### A Voice From England

By T. E. HARVEY, M.P.

AT a time when the foundations of international life are being shaken by war it may seem an idle task to discuss the value of the application of proportional representation to the machinery of government. But if the principles of democracy are to continue and spread in influence it is of vital importance that democratic government should be conducted effectively and with regard to the considered opinion of all sections of the community. It is because proportional representation provides for this and other systems fail to do so that it is well to consider the need for its extension if democratic government is to survive the fiery ordeal

through which so many countries are now passing.

The system of election of representatives to a legislature or to local government authorities by means of a majority vote in single member constituencies is an imperfect and inadequate instrument for securing justice to minorities and not infrequently has resulted in gross misrepresentation. The grouping of constituencies so that each should return three, four, five, or more members, while each elector has one transferable vote, enables the elector to vote in order of preference for the various candidates and secures that no substantial minority will be utterly unrepresented. This method of securing proportional representation has been in practice successfully for about a generation in Tasmania, and in Eire

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since the first constitution of the Free State came into operation; it was recommended for adoption in Great Britain by the all-party Speakers' Conference in 1916 and by a majority by the Ullowater Conference of 1930. In the Electoral Reform Act of 1918 it was applied in the case of four university constituencies, but in all other cases the old single member constituency was retained. The method of the transferable vote is, however, being increasingly used in Britain by trade union and other organizations in the election of officers and committees and has been found to work most satisfactorily. On several occasions Bills have been presented in Parliament to apply proportional representation in local elections, and the need for it in the case of town councils is in many cases very great. In a number of metropolitan borough councils under the present single-member constituency system the whole council consists of members of one party, although a large number of electors have voted for other candidates. Thus in working class districts like Stepney and Bermondsey every councillor belongs to the Labour Party, while in West end districts like Westminster and Chelsea every councillor is a member of the Municipal Reform or Conservative Party. Such a system inevitably tends to silence effective criticism, to make easier mismanagement and corruption, and to deaden the interest of electors in municipal affairs. In the sphere of wider national politics the old system of the single member constituency in effect permanently disfranchises large minorities in different parts of the county where the nominee of the majority party is practically certain of election.

It is significant that in Europe today most of the countries which we regard as democratic in their institutions have adopted proportional representation in different forms. Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and Finland all have proportional representation. In France the Chamber of Deputies, shortly before the outbreak of the present war, agreed to the principle of a Bill for proportional representation

in the election of the French Chamber. In the case of none of these countries has the introduction of proportional representation resulted in instability of government. In the case of Eire, although governmental majorities have been small, there have been only two prime ministers in office in the course of eighteen years. Proportional representation has enabled opinion to be represented in the Dail which could not have been under the previous system and has helped in a remarkable degree to allay the bitterness left behind by civil strife and bloodshed in past years. As Canon Luce, of Trinity College, Dublin wrote in 1938: "Proportional representation has been a healing force in our midst. Old political feuds are dying: public spirit is replacing faction. Our elections are well conducted. The voice of reason is heard and the gun is silent. Proportional representation deserves much of the credit: for proportional representation produces contented and loyal minorities, whereas the other system breeds muzzled, sullen, discontented minorities... The other system antagonizes majority and minority, accentuates the differences between them, and, therefore, weakens both. A contented minority is a strength to the majority, while a discontented minority and a bullying majority are a weakness to the whole body politic. Surely those who accuse proportional representation of making for weak governments are confusing the strength of authority, based on political consent, with the brute strength of *force majeure*. Since the establishment of the Free State we have lived under several administrations, every one of them elected by proportional representation. Every one of them has been a strong government, judged by the true test of strength. Their legislative output has been large, yet most of the grave measures has been carried by the slenderest majority. The scale only just turned, but there was consent behind it and whether we approved or disapproved, we all accepted the decisions loyally and cheerfully and made them our own; for we have been able to say to ourselves

'It is the will of the people, ascertained under the fairest electoral system ever devised by the mind of man.' We shall not be able to say that if proportional representation goes." (Letter to the *Irish Times*, 23rd. June, 1938)

It has been objected that in many cases electors would not be able to understand the system of voting under proportional representation, but the successful employment in Eire, where at the last election ninety-nine per cent of the votes cast were correctly marked, proves that this is not the case. In India, where communal division is acute, some approach to proportional representation has found a place in the new constitution, it being provided that the single transferable vote shall be used in the election of the federal Legislative Assembly. In February 1939 provision was made for the non official members of the Council of Government of Malta to be elected by proportional representation and it is also in use in Palestine in the election of the Council of Tel-Aviv and certain other bodies.

In the last year or two there has been a remarkable growth of opinion in the United States in favour of proportional representation in order to cope with the evils of municipal corruption which had arisen through the manipulation of the old electoral system by party bosses. The most conspicuous success of the movement has been the adoption of proportional representation in the city of New York, which came into force in the election of November, 1937. A combination of the old party delegates endeavoured to make proportional representation unconstitutional under the revised Constitution of New York State, but the amendment to effect this required ratification by a referendum, and after a keenly contested campaign the amendment was defeated in every county in the State, and in the State as a whole by a two to one majority. The great suburban borough of Yonkers subsequently adopted proportional representation for its own municipal elections and the system remains in force in New York City. Bills have already been introduced in a number

of other states to authorise the application of proportional representation in municipal elections, usually in conjunction with the appointment of a city manager.

Although Canada has hitherto taken less interest in this method of political reform than some other dominions, the system of proportional representation has been applied in the election of the representatives of Calgary and Edmonton to the Legislature of Alberta and in certain municipal elections, as in the case of the City of Saskatoon. The evils calling for this reform in some of the great cities of the United States may not be found in Canada, but the danger always is present that the abuses of the single member constituency which have facilitated the rule of Tammany Hall in the past, may bring about a similar situation in other countries. The example of those democratic countries of Europe which have adopted the system of proportional representation must encourage us in the belief that the growth of free institutions of government in both hemispheres of the world will be greatly assisted by the spread of this method of election alike in municipal and legislative bodies. It provides, as no other system does, for the just representation of every considerable group of electors. It will not destroy the party system, but will tend to purify it, by permitting to the individual elector a fuller choice and by allowing more than one candidate belonging to the same party to contest the same constituency without loss to that party's representation, owing to the action of the transferable vote. It removes a sense of real grievance from large bodies of citizens who feel themselves unrepresented under the existing system and encourages an intelligent interest in local and national administration wherever it is applied. Proportional representation is the natural expression of the principle of democratic government, assuring to all citizens a fair share in the conduct of the institutions which control and express their relations to one another as members of a free self governing community.