

Mr. McNab.

ABSOLUTE MAJORITY VOTE.

ANALYSIS.

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A BILL INTITULED

AN ACT to insure the Representation of Majorities.

Title.

BE IT ENACTED by the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :—

1. The Short Title of this Act is "The Absolute Majority Vote Act, 1900."

Short Title.

2. In this Act,—

Interpretation.

"Absolute majority of votes" means a number of votes greater than one-half of the number of all the voters who vote at an election, exclusive of voters whose ballot-papers are rejected; but the casting-vote of the Returning Officer, when given, shall be included in reckoning an absolute majority of votes.

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of section one hundred and one of "The Electoral Act, 1893," a voter may, if he thinks fit, indicate on his ballot-paper the name or names of any candidate or candidates for whom he desires his vote or votes to be counted in the event of any candidate or candidates for whom he voted in the first instance not receiving an absolute majority of votes; and, if he indicates more than one such candidate, may indicate the order in which he desires that his vote or votes shall be counted for any such candidate or candidates.

Contingent vote may be given.

Such indication shall be made by writing the figures "1," "2," "3," "4," or any subsequent number, opposite to the name or names of the candidate or candidates for whom he does not vote in the first instance, but for whom he desires his vote or votes to be so counted, and the order indicated by such numbers shall be taken to be the order in which he desires his vote or votes to be so counted:

Provided always that no mere irregularity or error in writing such figures, nor any omission to write the same, shall invalidate the vote or votes given by a voter in favour of any candidate or candidates in the first instance if the ballot-paper of the voter is otherwise in order.

Who are elected.

4. When in any district as many candidates obtain an absolute majority of votes as there are members to be returned at the election, the candidates so obtaining an absolute majority of votes shall be declared by the Returning Officer duly elected as members for the said district.

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Defeated candidates.

5. At any election,—

(1.) When one member only is to be returned at the election, and no candidate receives an absolute majority of votes; or

(2.) When more than one member is to be returned at the election, and there are not the required number of candidates each of whom receives an absolute majority of votes,—

Votes given to defeated candidates, how dealt with.

the vote of every voter who has voted for the candidate who has received the smallest number of votes shall be counted for such one or more of the remaining candidates as he has indicated in manner aforesaid, and the votes so counted for such remaining candidates shall be added to the votes originally given for them: Provided, however, that, for the purpose of ascertaining the absolute majority of votes only, the ballot-papers of all voters who have voted for the candidate who has received the smallest number of votes and who have not indicated in manner provided by section *three* hereof for whom they desire to vote shall be deemed to be rejected.

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Contingent vote again exercised.

6. The provisions of sections *four* and *five* hereof shall apply to the votes as ascertained by the preceding section, until—

(1.) When one member only is to be returned, a candidate receives an absolute majority; or

(2.) When more than one member is to be returned, there are the required number of candidates, each of whom receives an absolute majority.

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Returning Officer to exercise casting-vote.

7. When two or more candidates, none of whom are elected, receive an equal number of votes, and one of such candidates would, if there had been no equality of votes, have secured the smallest number of votes, the Returning Officer shall decide which of such candidates shall be deemed to have received the smallest number of votes.

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Irregularity not to void ballot-paper.

8. If a voter writes a figure opposite to the name of a candidate for whom he votes in the first instance, the ballot-paper shall not be rejected for that reason only.

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Amendments of "The Electoral Act, 1893."

9. "The Electoral Act, 1893," is hereby amended as follows:—

(1.) Section one hundred and twenty, by striking out all the words after the word "candidate" in line six thereof;

(2.) The Fourteenth Schedule, by inserting after the word "vote," in line two of the directions, the words "in the first instance," and by inserting the following new paragraph as the third paragraph therein:—

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"The voter may indicate, by writing the figures '1,' '2,' '3,' or any subsequent number, opposite the name or names of candidates struck out, the names of candidates for whom he desires his vote or votes to count in the event of the candidate or candidates for whom he votes in the first instance not securing an absolute majority of votes."

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Incorporation of the provisions of "The Electoral Act, 1893,"

10. This Act shall be read together with "The Electoral Act, 1893."

THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY VOTING SYSTEM.

THE object sought to be attained by this system is a more efficient representation of the majority of the electors in the various electoral districts. Under the present system, owing to the number of candidates for election, the successful candidate need not receive more than a substantial minority of the votes recorded.

Under the system proposed by this Bill the elector records his vote in the first instance, as at present, by drawing his pencil through the names of those for whom he does not intend to vote.

Having thus indicated his or her choice, the elector further indicates his preference of the rejected candidates by placing the numerals 1, 2, 3, &c., after their names.

In counting the votes, a first count is made as at present, and if the highest candidate has received a majority of all the votes cast he is elected.

If the required majority be not attained, the votes are recounted as if the candidate whose name is at the foot of the list had never been nominated. His votes are distributed among the remaining candidates, and this process is repeated until a candidate has received a majority of the votes polled.

The majority of the electorates being single ones, a single electorate is chosen. In triple electorates the only difference will be that the count goes on until the lowest of the leading three has secured an absolute majority. An absolute majority means more than half the number of votes.

Four candidates are nominated—Reid, Kingston, Braddon, and Turner.

A TYPICAL BALLOT-PAPER.

Reid.	2
Kingston.	1
Braddon.	
Turner.	3

Braddon is here the choice, with Kingston the candidate on whom the choice would have rested had Braddon never been nominated, Reid next.

Here the voter's duties cease.

The votes are counted as at present, with, say, the following result:—

Reid	...	...	...	...	...	5,000
Turner	...	...	...	...	...	3,500
Braddon	...	...	...	...	...	3,400
Kingston	...	...	...	...	...	2,100

14,000 electors having voted, the absolute majority is 7,001.

In the vote, Kingston is out of the count, and has proved only a disturbing element in the contest. What would have happened had Kingston never been nominated? Examine Kingston's papers and ascertain how the 2,100 would have voted had the contest been con-

fined to Reid, Turner, and Braddon. The numeral "1" will indicate each one's choice. Suppose an examination reveals the fact that Reid would receive 800, Turner 1,000, and Braddon 300. The poll will now be declared,—

Reid	...	...	...	5,000	+	800	=	5,800
Turner	...	...	...	3,500	+	1,000	=	4,500
Braddon	...	...	...	3,400	+	300	=	3,700

Reid, though leading, has not secured an absolute majority, as Turner and Braddon's supporters might be of similar views and might combine to defeat him. Take Braddon's 3,700 voting-papers and find out how these have placed Reid and Turner, had Braddon never been a candidate. Supposing 3,000 preferred Turner, and 700 preferred Reid. The poll will now be declared,—

Turner	...	...	...	4,500	+	3,000	=	7,500
Reid	...	...	...	5,800	+	700	=	6,500

Turner is elected; majority, 1,000.

The fight is therefore shown to have waged around Turner and Reid, the other two proving but disturbing elements. Under the present system of election these disturbing elements would have prevented the constituency selecting the candidate of their choice (Turner), and compelled them to select Reid by a majority of 1,500 (*vide* first count).