

ABSOLUTE MAJORITY VOTING SYSTEM.

THE object sought to be attained by this system is a 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 number of the votes recorded. Under the system outlined by this Bill nothing new is introduced into the electoral laws except the one point that after the electors themselves have determined who are not in the contest and are only disturbing the issue, these men retire from the contest.

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. The electors who voted for him have their votes distributed among the remaining candidates, according as the numbers indicate their preference. 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.

Suppose a popular contest for the Federal Premiership between Forrest, Kingston, Lyne, and Turner. A voter who preferred Lyne, with Kingston, Forrest, and Turner next in order, would send in a ballot-paper in the following form :—

Forrest.	2
Kingston.	1
Lyne.	
Turner.	3

The only novelty introduced is the numbering of those whose names are struck out.

The double system of striking out and numerals is adopted to utilise to the fullest the present political experience of electors who are already familiar with the first part of the system. Even if he goes no further his vote is formal and serves for all purposes except where the man of his choice is out of it, and that happens with our present system.

Here the voter's duties cease.

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

Forrest ...	...	...	...	...	...	5,000
Turner ...	...	...	...	...	...	3,500
Lyne ...	...	...	...	...	...	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 to be the man who, if it could have been ascertained beforehand, would have been asked to retire. 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 confined to Forrest, Turner, and Lyne. The numeral "1" will indicate each one's choice. Suppose an examination reveals the fact that Forrest would receive 800, Turner 1,000, and Lyne 300. The poll will now be declared,—

Forrest ...	...	...	5,000	+	800	=	5,800
Turner ...	...	...	3,500	+	1,000	=	4,500
Lyne ...	...	...	3,400	+	300	=	3,700

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

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

Turner is elected; majority, 1,000.

The fight is therefore shown to have waged around Turner and Forrest, the other two proving to be the men whom the electors would have asked to step aside had they known what was going to happen. Under the present system of election these candidates would have prevented the constituency selecting the candidate of their choice (Turner), and compelled them to select Forrest by a majority of 1,500 (*vide* first count).

For reference, honourable members' attention is directed to former debates on the Absolute Majority Bill in N.Z. *Hansard*, 1898, Vol. 101, pp. 303, 312; 1899, Vol. 106, pp. 503, 524; 1900, Vol. 111, pp. 137, 148; 1902, Vol. 120, pp. 224, 228. "The Election Acts (Consolidated), 1885-98" (Queensland), sections 78A to 78J. Nanson on "Methods of Election," pp. 5, 12. The rival system of the second ballot will be found discussed in *Hansard*, Vol. 122, pp. 184, 221.

Mr. McNab.

ABSOLUTE MAJORITY VOTE.

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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, 1903."

Short Title.

2. In this Act,—

Interpretation.

10 "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.

15 3. Notwithstanding the provisions of section one hundred and twenty-four of "The Electoral Act, 1902," 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.

25 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:

30 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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Votes given to defeated candidates, how dealt with.

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,—

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.

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.

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.

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.

Amendments of "The Electoral Act, 1902."

9. "The Electoral Act, 1902," is hereby amended as follows:—

(1.) Section one hundred and twenty-five, by inserting, after the word "vote" in line six thereof, the words "and shall indicate in manner hereinbefore provided the name or names of any candidate or candidates for whom he does not vote in the first instance but for whom he desires his vote or votes to be counted as provided in section *three* hereof."

(2.) Section one hundred and thirty-seven of "The Electoral Act, 1902," is hereby amended—(a) by the insertion of the words "in the form numbered in the First Schedule hereto" after the words "public notice" in line six thereof; (b) by the insertion of the words "the total number of voters who recorded their votes, the absolute majority, and the number of informal votes" after the word "candidate" in line six thereof; (c) by repealing

the words "the greatest number," and inserting the words "an absolute majority" in lieu thereof.

5 (3.) The First Schedule, (18), 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 therein:—

10 "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."

(4.) The First Schedule, by the addition of the following:—

15 (21A.) DECLARATION OF RESULT OF POLL.

I, A. B., Returning Officer for the Electoral District of _____, do hereby declare the result of the poll taken on the _____ day of _____, 19____, for the said district to the House of Representatives to be as follows:—

20

<i>First Count.</i>					Votes polled.
Candidates.					
C. D.
E. F.
G. H.
I. J.
25 K. L.
Total valid votes polled...					_____
Total number of voters...					_____
Absolute majority					_____
Informal votes					_____

30

<i>Second Count.</i>					Votes polled.
Candidates.					
C. D.
E. F.
G. H.
35 I. J.
Total valid votes polled...					_____
Total number of voters...					_____
Absolute majority					_____

40 And, if necessary, third count, &c.
Dated at _____, this _____ day of _____, 19____.

_____, Returning Officer.

10. This Act shall be read together with "The Electoral Act, 1902."

Incorporation of the provisions of "The Electoral Act, 1902."