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THE RECORD OF P.R. IN AMERICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT:  
A CRITICAL VIEW

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## General Principles

This paper deals with American local government. Its subject matter, however, cannot be dealt with unless we realize that the theory of P.R. was developed on a wider basis, starting with national government and, so far as the United States is concerned, leading to a concentration on local government for practical reasons. Clarence Gilbert Hoag and George Hervey Hallett, Jr. 1/ report that William Hoag, Secretary of the Proportional Representation League from 1909-1911, "initiated the policy... of concentrating its (the League's) efforts on the adoption of P.R. for city councils so as to get actual demonstrations of its merits, if only on a small scale." The larger goals, nevertheless, have not been ignored.

Dr. Hallett, who has carried the American banner for P.R. for so many years, recently published an essay entitled "Proportional Representation with the Single Transferable Vote: A Basic Requirement for Legislative Elections." 2/ He considers P.R. a logical implication of the "one-man one-vote" rule and has expressed the hope that the Supreme Court will declare it a requirement of the Constitution. This point will apparently be argued before the Court in the case of Davis vs. Bailemer, which centers on gerrymandering, but has caused proponents of P.R. to state that no redistricting under majority voting will do; it has to be P.R. all the way, and the Single Transferable Vote (STV) at that. 3/

In an examination of the issues involved it might be useful to recall what Walter Lippmann wrote two generations ago: "For the most part, we do not first see and then define; we define first and then see." 4/ This statement is more relevant now than it was when originally made, and nowhere more so than in a discussion of electoral systems. In the case of P.R. all essential problems arise from the fact that its proponents first use a concept of representation which takes much for granted of what they ought to prove, and then see everything in the light of that concept. They are thereby depriving themselves of a chance to observe any of the drawbacks which result from the application of P.R. while ignoring the positive aspects of what majority voting contributes to the democratic process.

The characteristic feature of P.R. is simple. For centuries it was understood that representation was one of communities; the French term for the English House of Commons, Chambre des Communes, makes that explicit. P.R., on the other hand, does not aim at communities. It looks to parts rather than to the whole, be it on the local or on the national level. One of its most eloquent proponents, Victor Considerant 5/ went so far as to say: "Does the Chamber of Representatives have to represent the electorate? That is the whole question. If such is the case, every opinion, however absurd, even monstrous it may appear, must have its representatives in proportion to its strength in the electorate."

James Madison knew better than to follow such a concept of representation. He did refer to the unavoidable presence of a variety of groups in a country mentioning, incidentally, non-economic before economic ones. (The Federalist, No. 10) Madison's first sentence states: "Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction." (Italics supplied) It does not matter that Madison, who was troubled, as were the other Framers, by the historical record of factions like the Ghibellines and the Guelphs, failed to see the positive

role which political parties and interest groups play as the "intermediate powers" of a modern democracy. His real target was violent groups which, with their "unfriendly passion," were willing to "excite the most violent conflicts." That type of group came to full bloom in American history first as the anti-Masons, then as the Know-Nothings, the Klan of post-Civil War and post-World War I varieties, and others. In our day, and on a more formidable scale, Communists, Fascists, and National Socialists are the best examples. Madison did not want to violate the spirit of liberty in dealing with such movements. Democracy offered the remedy in its own processes. "If a faction consists of less than a majority, relief is supplied by the republican principle, which enables the majority to defeat its sinister views by regular vote." Locally some of their candidates might still be elected, but in a large country as a whole they would have scant chance to prevail. This was a dynamic approach to a vital problem chosen by the "Father of the Constitution" and accepted without dissent by all of the Framers.

? The proponents of P.R. not only assume that a system of voting is passive but also that it is static. The groups to be proportionately represented exist before systems of voting come into play, and these do not affect the group themselves. Actually, systems of voting constitute an important part of what Alexander Hamilton called "the channels of government." Channels direct and contain the waters which enter them. Majority voting largely excludes violent groups from entering democratic parliaments. It also demonstrates that moderation pays: Whenever in our political history a particularly violent group is defeated at the polls, their rank and file rejoins the moderate parties. Sometimes even their leaders do the same; some prominent anti-Masons and even more prominent Know-Nothings eventually came to occupy leading positions in the party of Lincoln.

Representation as Madison conceived it does have a chance "to refine and enlarge the public views," directing them to the selection of moderate and responsible leaders who can fully actualize the positive potential of their country. Majority voting recognizes and respects separate groups but it clearly points beyond them; there must be agencies which can act on behalf of the whole. It is hardly surprising that Ralph A. Straats, 7/ writing on "P.R. Politics in Cincinnati," should fully endorse Arthur F. Bentley's statement that "The Society itself is nothing other than a complex of the groups that compose it." When Madison recognized groups as unavoidable he assumed that they would operate within a framework which subjected violent groups to serious handicaps and compelled the remainder to operate under conditions which guaranteed that above them there would be political parties representing a cross-section of all groups. The decision as to which party was to get a majority is to be made in a "struggle with the tendency to integration." 8/ of what?

It is argued that participation in democratic debate may either soften or deflate extremist groups. 9/ The argument implies that we must distinguish between the process of debate, in which everyone ought to participate, and that of decision, in which the majority must prevail. Parties imbued with "the violence of faction" are, however, often unwilling - in fact genetically unable - to participate in the give and take of democratic debate. They may be willing to insult and obstruct as to genuinely debate. Joseph Goebbels, 10/ soon to become Hitler's Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, put it succinctly: "We enter Parliament in of what?"

order to supply ourselves, in the arsenal of democracy, with its own weapons. We become members of the Reichstag in order to paralyze the Weimar sentiment with its own assistance. If democracy is so stupid as to give us free tickets and salaries for this bear's work, that is its affair..."

It is interesting to note how Hoag and Hallett 11/ viewed this situation:

We do not doubt that the rise of new parties, extreme as well as moderate, is often facilitated by P.R. In Germany in the P.R. election of May 4, 1924, the new Freedom Party of General Ludendorff, (Hitler's party) which could scarcely have made a creditable showing under a majority system, elected 32 members to the Reichstag. In the same election the larger Communist minority elected 62.

But we do not regard the just representation of such parties as a disadvantage.

Hoag and Hallett felt that once such extremist groups existed they should not be denied parliamentary expression which, in fact, as they stated, just gives them a hearing and might make them less bitter.12/ Madison viewed the matter differently: If the voter kept (thanks to majority voting) such parties out of legislatures they might still "clog the administration" and "convulse the society," but they would "be unable to execute and mask their violence under the forms of the Constitution." The Nazis had tried to "convulse the society" in Hitler's beer hall putsch of November 9, 1923 which resulted in a bloody defeat. Hitler swore ~~that~~ henceforth he would limit himself to "legal" means, of which participation in elections was the most important. The baker's dozen seats they won, thanks to P.R., in December 1928 when their stock was low, kept them alive, performing for them the services which Dr. Goebbels gratefully acknowledged. Two years later the depression had made deep cuts in the German economy and the Nazis stood ready to gather their share of the huge protest vote which it engendered; together with the Communists they were able to block the normal functioning of parliamentary government.

There was, however, one exception to the Nazis' relentless advance. In the presidential elections of March and April 1932 majority voting had given voters a chance to express a definite political will rather than inviting them to break up into ideological blocks. The candidate of the moderates, von Hindenburg, defeated Hitler with 53 percent to 36.8 percent of the votes. Those of us who lived through those days felt that this was the end for the Nazis. We were soon to be shocked by the Reichstag elections of July and December, again held under P.R., in which Nazis and Communists combined had an overall majority. Helmut Unkelbach,13/ one of Germany's foremost experts on elections, held that there would have been a real chance to defeat the Nazis in the parliamentary elections in July 1932 had they been held under the old German system of run-off voting. He assumed that former Social Democrats who had voted for the Communists in the first ballot would have opted for the Social Democrats in the second had the alternative been the election of a Nazi, just as former right-of-center voters who had supported a Nazi in the first ballot were likely to have voted for a moderate candidate when the alternative was the success of a Communist.

How could Hoag and Hallett, even in 1926 when they were publishing their book, view the parliamentary beginnings of the Nazi party so tolerantly? The key lies in their concept of representation. The "just representation

of such parties" was simply natural for them, whether those parties used violence or not. Still, when we call something "just" we move into the related fields of ethics and philosophy, and would do well to look for an expert, of whom there is none better than the philosopher, Jacques Maritain. 14/ When patriotic Frenchmen were discussing how to replace the decrepit Third Republic he wrote in La République Française:

In order to eliminate every attempt to introduce the "Trojan Horse of proportional representation into the democratic structure, let us note that just as the common good is not a simple sum of individual goods, so the common will is not a simple sum of individual wills. Universal suffrage does not have the aim to represent simply atomic wills and opinions, but to give form and expression, according to their respective importance, to the common currents of opinion and of will which exist in the nation. The political line of a democracy must frankly and decidedly be determined by the majority, while the parties composing the minority play the part, also fundamental, of the critical element, in an opposition which is not destructive, but as much as possible constructive and cooperative. Thus the majority and minority express the will of the people in opposite, but complementary and equally real, fashions.

of what?

Maritain, then, saw clearly that "justice" for ideological parts means injustice for the whole. His advice ignored, he lived to see the results of P.R.: three ideological giants came to dominate the scene and no two of them could form an effective coalition. Matters improved only marginally when bits of majority voting were introduced in 1951. They softened the lines somewhat with the presence of more independent groups, but the resulting mess was still so great that, by 1958, the French were glad that General deGaulle saved them from the parachutists ready to take over.

We must now turn to the question whether such results could have been prevented by the STV, which is considered so superior to the European list system. Richard S. Katz 15/ gave the reply in these words: "To a greater extent than any other system, STV removes the disincentives to fragmentation. Even if a party wins no seats, its votes need not be wasted since they can be transferred to other parties." Thomas Hare, 16/ the co-inventor of the STV, proposed that English voters be able to express a preference for every candidate in the United Kingdom, including Ireland, and be given "a freedom of choice, not only for two or three but probably of two or three thousand candidates." As a result, he stated: "many more candidates will be everywhere put in nomination...minorities... (will) far exceed the number of minorities now existing, by the operation of numberless affinities and compulsions which, in a state of liberation, will dissolve the present majorities." 17/ The reason why the practical experience with the STV has not been so radical is the now customary watering down of proportionality in small constituencies. In ~~the~~ three-member constituencies a party with more than half of the first preference votes wins two of the three seats; as constituencies grow larger the chances for smaller parties increase. In any event, STV means more candidates, and this makes small constituencies imperative. In the 1937 elections in the Borough of Brooklyn, with nine seats at stake, 99 names appeared on the ballot, which was four feet long. As Newton D. Baker put it: "The voter can say: I want Jones! He cannot assort Jones, Thompson, Smith, Williams, Johnson and a half dozen others into a table of relative excellencies and comparative virtues and get it all marked on a ballot--nor is his action

in the lower reaches of opinion, among men whom he does not know, of the slightest value."

The voter may leave his ballot blank or he may make it ineffective by marking not enough, with the result that his vote becomes "exhausted." Voting may also be at random, or alphabetic, or racial. All of these drawbacks will appear on a much reduced scale in a smaller city with fewer names on the ballot, but they can assume decisive proportions in a large one. Furthermore, the count is costly and takes more time than under majority voting, although these problems may now be reduced by the use of voting machines plus computers. 19/ The machines also facilitate refinements such as calculating the new quota after every count.

The effects of any type of P.R. also depend on other factors, beginning with elements of the constitutional structure. For instance, when a powerful president is elected by majority vote this may induce the voters to support his party in parliamentary elections, as happened in 1985 in both El Salvador and Peru. The opposite effect is equally possible and has occurred in a number of Latin American countries (including Peru in the years before the military takeover.) The fragmentation of legislative bodies may encourage a proliferation of presidential candidates (as in Bolivia in 1985). Nobody then gets the required overall majority and the president has a tenuous legitimacy, facing a parliament difficult to control.

Naturally, a country's general conditions influence the results of P.R. Economic prosperity favors voter concentration on moderate parties, while depressions do the opposite. 20/ The interplay of the various factors is complex, and a fully satisfactory treatment requires a country-by country approach. 21/

There is, finally, a difference between P.R. on the national (and state) level and P.R. in local elections. As long as majority, and in particular plurality, voting exists on the higher levels, municipal politics move in sheltered waters. Political thinking is anchored for the most part in a centrist position. If P.R. is introduced in local elections, and fragmentation and deadlock eventually develop, state intervention is available as a court of last resort. This helps somewhat to keep council members in line, and so does the possibility that P.R. might be repealed by referendum.

#### Electoral Systems in Local Government: Overpowering Majorities.

We now turn to the question whether there are special reasons for P.R. in local government either generally or, for special reasons in the United States; in the latter case, the argument may become cumulative.

First, local elections are, the world over, characterized by the tendency of allegiances formed in the area of national elections being transferred to the local scene without allowing for significant differences. Naturally, national and local government have one requirement in common: There must be a government, meaning an executive, preferably supported by a majority of the legislature. Majority voting will, as a rule, provide for both.

Overlarge and overpowering majorities are less likely nationally than locally. In most countries, in particular in industrial ones, certain areas will be dominated by one party (such as a union-supported one in

industrial areas and a church-supported one in rural areas) and, as a result, overall majorities will be limited. They may, however, still exceed what is truly functional, and in that case the political system will suffer. This has been pointed out by political observers since the days of Disraeli. 22/ There exists a choice of remedies which need not be discussed in detail on this occasion.

In municipalities one party may dominate the inner city and another the suburbs (assuming that these do not constitute separate units), but in not a few American cities under majority voting one party dominates the council membership to such an extent that there is no effective opposition. What has been done to correct this situation usually is termed "limited voting": In multiple-member constituencies the voter's choices are limited to less than the number of available seats. This choice of words has, on the part of certain groups, led to terminological depreciation. Hoag and Hallett 23/ write: "The crudest election system intended to give representation to minorities is what is known as the 'limited vote.' Does that not mean that these authors 'define first and then see'? In their view representation requires, by definition, that members of an elected body reflect the strength of whatever groups line up behind certain candidates, whether these are members of a party or not. Proportionality then becomes a moral imperative and everything must be evaluated in its terms. They might have considered what John Jay wrote in The Federalist No. 64: 'Although the absolute necessity of system, in the conduct of any business, is universally known and acknowledged, yet the high importance of it in national affairs has not yet become sufficiently impressed upon the public mind.' The system with which we deal is democratic in the sense of the Declaration of Independence: 'That to secure these rights (Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness) Governments are instituted among Men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.' There must, then, be governments, and they must be able to exercise their 'just powers' - something which, in view of the desultory Articles of Confederation, The Federalist drives home rather forcefully. Evidence of the precarious nature of such powers under P.R. is ample.

Contemporary experience includes that of Israel, of The Netherlands where the fragility of the government is, at least in part, to be blamed for an unemployment rate of 17 percent, of Belgium where ethnic divisions are potentiated by the opportunities given to small groups within the major ethnic divisions, and to Germany where, in spite of the five percent clause, the Greens exercise an influence way beyond their strength, and even of Ireland where, under the STV, the elections of November 1982 were the third in 18 months.

In local government the need for a forceful executive has, in recent years, led to increasing use of the "strong Mayor" form of government. This has, however, still left important tasks for the city council. Within that body active control and vigorous debate are greatly assisted by the presence of an effective minority, the function of which is, however, not the "representation" of social groups per se. Any and all groups must be induced to cooperate so as to create a council which is an effective organ for the fulfillment of functions vital for the system as a whole. Maritain's concluding words in the above quotation are: "Thus the majority and the minority express the will of the people in opposite, but complementary and equally real fashion." For the opposition, too, there is a function to be exercised in the interest of the whole, and it ought to be constituted so as to be able to fulfill these functions.



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In local as in national government more than one method is available to insure the presence of an effective minority. Thus, the English election law of 1867 provided that in 12 cities three-member constituencies be instituted with every voter casting but two votes. The reason was the wish to prevent the division of cities which until then had voted as a unit. In local government it is at least as sensible to have such major districts as to have small wards. To take one example, New York City has now (after the election of two councilmen at large for each borough, with voters limited to one vote, was declared unconstitutional in 1981 because of the unequal size of the boroughs) again only single-member districts; they number 35 and at the time of this writing all seats are held by Democrats. The city could easily be divided into 15 three-member districts of equal size with voters being allowed to cast their ballots for only two candidates. This arrangement would provide for a stronger opposition than there was before 1981, and could not easily be challenged in the courts. The chances for disadvantaged groups would be enhanced not only by the third seat but also by the fact that the major parties would have an incentive to return to the pre-primary days. Then they could, in particular for state-wide offices, adopt a "balanced ticket," doing justice to the major groups of the day. Virginia managed to keep the old system, and at the Democratic state convention of 1985 could adopt what was hailed as a "dream ticket," a white male for governor, a black male for lieutenant-governor and a (white) woman for attorney-general.<sup>24</sup> Such arrangements do recognize the existence of groups but put the nominees in harness with each other, teaching them to keep the whole as firmly in mind as the parts. The proposed two-to-one system would provide the same kind of opportunity, bearing in mind that groups not accommodated in one district could be given their due in another. Under P.R., of course, comparatively small groups can nominate whomsoever they please and the nominees might find it to their advantage to emphasize what separates them from others rather than what all have in common.

#### Boss Rule and Remedies.

American cities do have reasons of their own to provide for an effective opposition. Boss and machine rule, not entirely unknown at the beginning of the 19th century, fully came into their own during the generation following the Civil War.<sup>25</sup> Urbanization developed rapidly. Major cities had to absorb waves of immigrants, be it from abroad or from the country's rural districts, who knew little of their new community, often cared less, and frequently found themselves barred from all political communication by language differences. The machine filled the void. Citizenship and other papers were provided with a minimum of trouble. Jobs were found. Direct feeding of the needy was widespread, as was assistance in the case of emergencies such as illness and funerals. The purveyors of such services had no trouble in securing not only the votes of the immediately concerned, but also those of relatives and friends.

There was also an increasingly complicated political structure. Under the guise of "the federal analogy" a separation of powers with a vengeance was instituted, often in the form of a weak mayor finding himself confronted with a powerful council and other elected officials. The boss was only too happy to fill the vacuum; his machine united what the charter had so artfully divided. At times the mayor and a council dominated by his men were "the law." Even at that time an independent and sufficiently strong opposition might have made a difference.

These conditions never had anything to do with orderly majority

rule, and they began to change within a few decades. The first generation of urban immigrants was followed by a second one for whom the "shame of the cities" was a shame of their city. They developed a leadership of their own, or were able to recognize leadership from the outside which they could respect. The dependence upon the "social services" of the machine lasted longer; it took the federal, state and local efforts which began in the 1930's to end it, though at times some of the administrators of the new agencies exposed themselves to the charge that one type of machine rule had followed another. Countervailing forces were, however, in place. Civil service rules became increasingly effective. The influence of the reform groups established at the turn of the century continued to grow. Commission- and council-manager government constituted a reversal of the old practices; where these new forms of city government were adopted and found the support of an alert citizenry they combined efficient management and civic responsibility. These systems work best when there are clear council majorities, preferably flanked by effective opposition. <sup>26</sup> The factors making for improvement strengthened each other, and Don K. Price could write as early as in 1941:

It is customary to talk about an invariable "cycle" of reform and corruption in municipal politics, and to deplore the decline in "citizen interest" and the persistence of "sinister influences" that make the down-swing of the cycle inevitable. This point of view is a stock excuse of those who try to sell the public political prayer-wheels, or gadgets that will make sure that the voters will want what the salesman thinks they ought to want. For there is available the story of city after city that for many years has had no municipal political machine, no organized corruption, and a fair degree of community coherence; the evidence suggests strongly that the voters are likely to give sustained support to public-spirited political leaders who are willing to adopt rules for the game of local government that facilitate rather than impede the effectiveness of public opinion.

#### Practical Experience in P.R. Cities.

The pages which follow are limited to highlights intended to illustrate a particular point. 27/

The first city to adopt P.R., Ashtabula, Ohio, was also the one which best illustrates the type of "representation" which may develop when the STV is operating in a town with active ethnic minorities. Suffice it to quote from an editorial in the Ashtabula Star Beacon of October 30, 1929, a few days before the city abolished P.R.:

As election day approaches we are as firmly convinced as ever that in these amendments the people of Ashtabula have an opportunity to rid our governmental structure of some of its weaknesses. Should they fail to take advantage of the opportunity they will have only themselves to blame if the future sees a continuance of the boy-play, laugh provoking situations, lack of dignity, poor coordination and general inefficiency which, at times, have characterized the official acts and conduct of our public servants, acts made possible by the somewhat grotesque features of the charter as it now exists.

Ashtabula, we believe, is deserving of better things. It is not right that we should have to be laughed at by the country at large because of the official clowning that sometimes goes on in the chambers of our city council. We are entitled to dignified, business-like

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government, but a review of the past shows that under Proportional Representation we have not always had it. Is Proportional Representation to blame?

The editorial then proceeds to demand that the voters be given a chance to vote for all of the seven councilmen of the city, and continues:

Are not all seven councilmen representatives of each citizen? Is there any sensible reason why a councilman should represent just a small group of people in his handling of city business? Is not the welfare of all the people in the hands of the individual council member? Does it make for the best kind of government to have Mr. A. represent the business men, Mr. B. the bankers, Mr. C. the Finnish, Mr. D. the Italians, Mr. E. the Liberals, Mr. F. the laboring man, etc.? Who, out of this list is going to represent the public, the ordinary, average citizen, who, after all, pays the bills and gets the jolts, if any.

Unless there is someone in the list broad enough minded and sufficiently liberal in his conception of public duty, the average citizen gets mighty little representation. Your councilmen, under such a system, are kept too busy satisfying their own relatively small constituency to take much interest in the needs of the community as a whole. If you need proof of this, turn back the pages of your own councilmanic history.

The author of this editorial was a simple, straightforward rural editor, not burdened with academic sophistication. Academic qualifications, however, were indeed present in Joseph P. Harris, who in an interview with the Ashtabula Star Beacon, published on November 2, 1929, was quoted as follows:

Mr. Harris told the Star-Beacon representative during his visit that Ashtabula is on the "right track" in the proposed charter amendment, particularly the one pertaining to the form of election. He said that in some 355 cities in America using the city manager plan, more than 340 use the seven-at-large system, with ordinary ballot, for election of councilmen. This, he declared, is regarded as the model form of election in city manager cities.

"Proportional representation," he said, "while accurate and fair enough does not work out well in cities where racial and national lines are closely marked. The system tends to aggravate racial differences, and sets up sharp dividing lines between various groups which is not good for the city as a whole. Instead of tending to fuse all races and nationalities for the common good, it accentuates their differences and keeps them further apart."

In Ashtabula the average voter just did not feel represented as long as one councilman acted as the exponent of one group and another one of a different group. There evidently existed in the town, in spite of all divisions, a feeling of community which too often was absent in the council. This was the major reason why, while the well-organized proponents of P.R., according to all reports, looked forward to victory in the repeal campaign, they found themselves defeated by 2639 votes to 1935. Deadlocks.

There is also the fact that Ashtabula, Cincinnati and Cambridge, Mass. were ~~also~~ confronted with protracted council deadlocks, which are hard to reconcile with any accepted concept of representation. Ashtabula's

first council needed fifty votes to elect a mayor. Cincinnati's council was deadlocked 4-4-1 for three successive elections. In Cambridge the council elected in 1948 cast vote after vote for several months in a row, finally electing a mayor after more than 1300 ballots, a fact which was commented upon from coast to coast.

The breaking of a deadlock requires concessions to one or two councilmen, which cause wide resentment. In such a process the political weight of the council member won over is considerably greater than that of those who are part of the regular line-up.

#### STV Problems in New York City.

*Cleveland?*  
*[ho]*

The case of New York City presents problems of its own. Between 1871 and 1933 the city had witnessed five reform administrations of two-years each; Tammany ruled for the rest of the time. Fiorello LaGuardia owed his first election (to a four-year term) in 1933 to the plurality system; the Democrats were split. He set out to demonstrate, as Presidents Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson had done successfully before him, that what first had been achieved with a plurality could receive the consent of a majority or near majority the next time around. Plurality voting, therefore, has its advantages as it may give new men and new policies a chance. New York City presents the only case in which the mayor and his city-wide running mates continued to be elected by popular vote after P.R. was introduced in 1937 for the city council. In 1937 La Guardia won close to 60 percent of the votes for himself and his running mates. When, at last, the P.R. council votes were counted, 13 of the 26 seats had gone to Tammany and 13 to Fusion. The president of the council, also elected at large by majority vote, would normally have cast the tie vote but one councilman, Mr. Michael Quinn, was in Ireland when the council was organized and the 13 Democrats claimed majority status. The case was referred to the courts which ruled, after nine months, that the organization set up by Tammany was legal and could not be changed for the remainder of the term.

? What went wrong with the council elections? New Yorkers would hardly have been schizophrenic enough to elect a council and a mayor with different majorities on the same day. Mayor LaGuardia declared: "At the last election had there been no Proportional Representation vote I could have carried an overwhelming majority of the city council." 28/ The reasons why Fusion did so badly in the council elections were discussed in the data on "Proportional Representation for the State Legislature." 29/ First there was a surprising number of invalid votes; in Brooklyn 103,601 voters out of 802,792 cast invalid ballots. Then there were the "exhausted ballots" of voters having marked a number of choices correctly, but not enough to make their ballots count; in Brooklyn they numbered 148,637. This means that 38 percent of the voters failed to make their vote count. 30/ The results in the other boroughs were somewhat better but not good enough to assure the Fusion victory which evidently the voters wanted. The Democrats, with 36 percent of the first choice voters, elected 50 percent of the council membership. The Independents with 27 percent, the Socialists with one percent, and the Communists with four percent (a total of 32 percent) elected nobody.

The other feature of the election which deserves mention is alphabetic and racial voting. Alphabetic voting occurs when voters simply do not know whom to mark next; they turn to the candidates listed next to their preferred nominees on the ballot. In future elections this effect can be reduced by rotating the names, and calculating machines

and computers can make it easier to rotate names and to lower quotas from count to count. Still, the voter may just scatter low preferences either up or down the list (alphabetical voting) or give their votes to those with names similar to their own, even if the political views of these candidates may be diametrically opposed to their own. All of this applies, of course, more to large cities than to smaller ones where the number of candidates may be lower and their views better known.

The later elections are dealt with in the editorials on P.R. published by The New York Times in October and November 1947. (See Appendix.)

A few more points might be taken up here: First, "racial voting." It has in many cases meant that voters unfamiliar with the candidates simply marked their ballots for people whose name seemed to indicate the same ethnic origin. Communist candidates (such as Mr. Caghione) were among the conspicuous beneficiaries who attracted Italian voters. In other cases there was, of course, deliberate racial discrimination, expressing a bias for or against candidates with a particular ethnic background. In that case group is set against group; differences are aggravated which majority voting tends to soften. (Such developments nowadays constitute a more acute problem than they did then. Some of our Latin immigrants reject the theory as well as the practice of the "melting pot." Furthermore, anti-semitic sentiments appear to be on the rise, and the general intensification of group feelings, including the political emergence of the gays, add to the problem.) Majority voting is still a barrier against a complete surrender to such differences. Most candidates must cut across most lines of division; the small number of votes for which they can hope from members of groups other than their own may be the margin of victory. As Senator Robert A. Taft pointed out in a conversation with this writer, minority candidates elected under majority voting tend to be different from those elected under P.R. In the first case there are reasons to nominate someone able to attract votes from groups other than his own, as is the case with the black mayors and legislators elected in recent years. Under P.R., however, the stronger advocates of a group's interests are more easily nominated, apart from the fact that under the STV they can just nominate themselves, more or less forcing the rest to go along. Might we not think about Jesse Jackson and Louis Farrakhan in this connection?

It is often said that the election of two Communists and two fellow-travelers to New York's city council was one of the reasons for the repeal of P.R. It is added that no Communist could win during the present period of conflict with Russia. This is true enough, but does it strengthen the case for P.R.? When extremists arise on the Right they are followed by the rise of extremists on the Left and vice versa. The American political pot is not yet boiling but there is enough simmering to discourage us from taking chances with P.R.

#### Conclusions.

So why use P.R. at all? If we supplement any one of the various types of majority voting with the unlimited use of commonsense in devising the proper type of "limiting voting" we have most of what we need for good city government. Naturally, the other elements of the political structure play their part. Cleveland and Chicago have, in recent years, been troubled by prolonged conflicts between mayor and council. The manager plan excludes such a possibility. It is working

"Doubtful"

well in most of the more than 2500 cities which use it. These do not include the largest ones. In the words of Bernard H. Ross and Murray St. Stedman 31/ "Psychologically, the mayor is viewed as the local counterpart of the governor or the president...Because the commission and council-manager plans have failed to meet these leadership standards, they have generally not been successful in the very largest American cities." Therefore, most observers favor, in these cases, the combination of a strong mayor and a professional administrator. That arrangement has its points, but it does not prevent the Cleveland and Chicago type of conflict. Perhaps consideration could be given to the equivalent of the council-manager plan which was established by the English in their zone of Germany and which the Germans liked so well that they kept it. Here, too, the council elects both the mayor and the professional administrator (Stadtdirektor, in the larger cities Oberstadtdirektor) who is given adequate tenure. The decisive difference from the American type lies in the fact that the majority party is an effective coordinator of mayor, council and Stadtdirektor. The mayor is elected by the council but his name is known to the voters before they cast their ballots. This provides him with a plebiscitary sanction which strengthens his hands with his party as well as with the council and the Stadtdirektor. The situation is more complicated when a minor party (now including the Greens) which owes every one of its seats to P.R., enters parliament, but that could not be the case in the United States as long as majority voting is retained. — The way the German system works in the city states of Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen should be of particular interest to our largest cities. They have a collegiate administration with the mayor flanked by political department heads. As a result, not everything is concentrated in the hands of one person as it is under the strong mayor plan. There is no reason why this arrangement should not work as well in American as it does in German cities of comparable size.

A final word on Cambridge, Mass., now the only one of the more than 2500 manager cities with P.R. Its people are told that a repeal of that system would mean the loss of all that the reform movement has accomplished. The citizens of Cincinnati were told the same, however, before they did repeal P.R. Its defeated proponents had the good sense to continue the work which they had done in the Charter Group. They promote their own candidates in the at large elections and operate as an alert watchdog on those in power. Why should it be different in Cambridge?

More  
differences  
in Cambridge

Footnotes

- 1/ Proportional Representation (New York, 1926), p. 188.
- 2/ Arend Lijphart and Bernard Grofman, Choosing an Electoral System, (New York, 1984), pp. 113 ff.
- 3/ For a succinct statement of this view see, in addition to Hallett, Paul J. Piccard, "Representation and Discrimination," The National Civic Review, November 1984.
- 4/ Public Opinion (New York, 1922), p. 81.
- 5/ "La Représentation nationale est un mensonge," La Phalange, June 17, 1842. This article is not signed, but obviously written by Considérant. Its reasoning agrees closely with that of Considérant's pamphlet: "De la sincérité du gouvernement représentatif, ou exposition de l'élection véridique," which was originally published in 1846 and reprinted in Zurich in 1896.
- 6/ Letter to Gouverneur Morris, May 10, 1777.
- 7/ P.R. Politics in Cincinnati: Thirty-Two Years of City Government through Proportional Representation (New York, 1958), pp. 97 ff.
- 8/ Rudolf Smend, Verfassung und Verfassungsrecht (Munich, 1928). On majority voting as an agent in establishing a (dynamic) national consensus, see Ferdinand A. Hermens, The Representative Republic (Notre Dame, 1958), pp. 163-192. This book is out of print but the pertinent chapters have, with the same pagination, been reprinted in 1959 under the title, Introduction to Modern Politics.
- 9/ Proportional Representation, op. cit., p. 134.
- 10/ Quoted from National Socialism: Basic Principles: Their Application by the Nazi Party's Foreign Organization and the Use of Germans Abroad for Nazi Aims, prepared in the special unit of the Division of European Affairs, U. S. Department of State, by R. E. Murphy and Associates (Washington, D.C., 1943), p. 63.
- 11/ Proportional Representation, op. cit., p. 134.
- 12/ Ibid. The discussion of this matter has to be brief. For more details see F. A. Hermens, Democracy or Anarchy? A Study of Proportional Representation. (Notre Dame, 1959) Reprinted with a Supplement by the Johnson Reprint Corporation (New York, 1972), pp. 227-231.
- 13/ "Ursachen des Zusammenbruchs der Weimarer Republik und ihre Lehren," in Ferdinand A. Hermens and Theodor Schieder, eds., Staat, Wirtschaft und Politik in der Weimarer Republik (Berlin, 1967), pp. 421-424. On the moderating effects of a second ballot in general, see Domenico Fisichella, "The Double-Ballot System as a Weapon against Anti-System Parties," in Arend Lijphart and Bernard Grofman, eds., op. cit., pp. 181 ff.
- 14/ December, 1943.



- 15/ "The Single Transferable Vote and Proportional Representation," in Arend Lijphart and Bernard Grofman, eds., op. cit., pp. 141 ff.
- 16/ The Election of Representatives, Parliamentary and Municipal, 4th ed, (London, 1873).
- 17/ Ibid., pp. xv and 26-27. For a general discussion of the STV (or Hare system) of P.R. as compared with a list system, see Hermens, Democracy or Anarchy? op. cit., pp. 43-50.
- 18/ "P.R. Invites Factional Strife, Baker Declares," Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 25, 1925. ✓
- 19/ Further drawbacks of the STV have been described by Steven J. Brams and Peter J. Fishburn, Approval Voting (Boston, 1983), pp. 6-8.
- 20/ For a wealth of statistical detail proving this for Germany, see Werner Kaltefleiter, Wirtschaft und Politik in Deutschland. Konjunktur als Bestimmungsfaktor des Parteiensystems, 2nd ed. (Cologne and Opladen), 1978). In view of the charge that the present writer has failed to stress the multiplicity of factors determining political action, see the detailed discussion in his Democracy or Anarchy? op. cit., pp. 198-210 and 285-292.
- 21/ The following publications of the "Forschungsinstitut fuer Politische Wissenschaft und Europäische Fragen" are relevant in connection with these problems:  
 Rudolf Wildermann: Macht und Konsens als Problem der Innen- und Aussen-Politik, 2nd ed. (Koeln and Opladen, 1967). Karl-Heinz Nassmacher: Das Oesterreichische Regierungssystem. Grosse Koalition oder alternierende Regierung? (Koeln and Opladen, 1968). Paul Kevenhörster: Das Politische System Japans. (Koeln and Opladen, 1969). Ernst-J. Kerbusch: Das uruguay-ische Regierungssystem. Der Zeite Colegio 1952-1967 (Koeln, 1971) Klaus Schumann, Das Regierungssystem der Schweiz (Koeln, 1971).
- 22/ Democracy or Anarchy?, op. cit., pp. 88 ff.
- 23/ Proportional Representation, op. cit., p. 42.
- 24/ Robert L. Asher, "Virginia's Democratic Ticket: A Dream in Any Other State," The Washington Post, June 11, 1985.
- 25/ F. A. Hermens, "Exit the Boss," The Review of Politics, October, 1940.
- 26/ "The Promotion of the City-Manager Plan," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 5, Nr. 4, Winter 1941, pp. 577-78.
- 27/ A good overall discussion of the American P.R. experience is, (in spite of the limited period covered) is given by Joseph P. Harris, "The Practical Working of Proportional Representation in the United States and Canada." Supplement to The National Municipal Review, (New York, 1931). See also Hermens, Democracy or Anarchy?, op. cit., pp. 366-419, and Hermens, "P.R. and Municipal Reform," The Review of Politics, Vol. V, 1943, reprinted in the booklet, P.R., Democracy and Good Government (New York, 1943).

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Hermens  
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## Footnotes -3-

- 28/ "State Lawmakers Warned by Mayor," The New York Times, August 24, 1936.
- 29/ Report of the New York State Constitutional Convention Committee appointed by Gov. Robert H. Lehmann to Collate Factoral Data for the Use of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1938.
- 30/ This writer, in an article published earlier, had minimized the technical difficulties which would arise under the STV; but Mr. James C. Hagerty of The New York Times told him that he had seen ballots on which 20 or more candidates had been marked correctly and which still became exhausted.
- 31/ Urban Politics, 3rd. ed. (Itasca, Ill., 1985).

THE FECOPD ON PR-1

On Nov. 3, 1936, the people of New York City voted a new Charter replacing the 65 member Board of Aldermen with a much smaller City Council and, on a separate question, set up a system of Proportional Representation voting by boroughs to elect the members of that Council. The vote on PR was 923,186 for to 555,217 against. This newspaper on the morning of the election in an editorial of "last-minute reminders" said: "If you wish to plump for a somewhat doubtful experiment with Proportional Representation, in a limited field, vote 'yes' on Question 2 Local". In November, 1937, the first new Council was elected. The city has thus had a full ten-year test of PR. We believe, for a number of reasons which we shall set forth in this and later editorials, that this "somewhat doubtful experiment" should be concluded as soon as possible. A proposal before the voters in referendum on November 4 will provide the opportunity to abolish PR.

In making known on this page in early April, 1947, our decision to support repeal of PR we were, of course, aware that we had in the earlier years of this experiment endorsed the workings of Proportional Representation and defended it against critics. PR seemed for a time to be accomplishing at least some of the hopes of its advocates. But we began as early as 1941 to point out the evidence of short-comings in PR, and have continued to do so steadily since, as it became constantly clearer that the system, no matter how attractive as theory, was defective in practice.

We favor repeal of PR for these reasons, and others:

1. It has failed to produce a City Council that fairly represented the sentiments of the people, notably so in the La Guardia regime when Fusion was in control of the city administration, but Tammany continued to dominate the Council.
2. It has fostered the growth of splinter parties, seating Communists and other radicals who could not, by normal majority and district voting methods, have hoped to become members and giving them an official sounding-board for views shared by only a meager fraction in the electorate.
3. Early assumptions that the electorate would, with practice and education, learn to use intelligently and effectively the complicated voting system of PR have proved ill-founded. After education campaigns and the experience of four previous elections, one voter in every four in the fifth election using PR either left his ballot blank, made it invalid through wrong marking or made his voice ineffective through failure to indicate a sufficient number of alternative choices. Thus 24.2 per cent of all ballots were ineffective for one reason or another in 1945. The Democratic machine has learned to use the PR ballot adroitly, and the Communists and others have become skilled in "bullet" voting, but the independent voters and, to a considerable extent, the Republicans have not been able to make their voice felt to a degree commensurate with their numbers.
4. Borough-wide election of Council members as provided under PR makes it impossible, in the great majority of cases, for the citizen to know the qualifications of the candidate he is voting for. The great expense of a campaign that would enable a candidate (for an office paying \$5,000 a year) to make his views known to several million residents in a whole borough is in itself an insuperable obstacle. To make his ballot effective, as the PR ideal calls for, a voter must mark a long list of preferences in their order. He can know well one or two of these candidates, parties, and the balance of his choices is random, unintelligent voting, too often done on merely racial, religious or indiscriminate party basis.

Record on PP-I (Continued)

5. Recount on a challenged contest is so costly that expense alone stands in the way of sincere challenge, since the candidate himself must bear the cost.

6. The neighborhood is no longer represented in our city legislature, and the return to a district form of voting could encourage legitimate attention to local interests needed for fair play and balanced development of the city. Under PR all the Council members from a borough could come from one block in that borough; it has, in fact, happened at times under PR that whole large sections of the city have had no spokesman in the Council. It is not here suggested that a return to an aldermanic type of log-rolling for the benefit of home districts would be desirable. But district representation does have an advantage in bringing to a legislature that specialized knowledge of local conditions that is one basis of good government.

7. The record of the Councils we have elected under PR, and the qualities of some of the members most in the public eye in recent years, are in themselves a major disappointment, tend to shake confidence in the democratic process and are a valid argument against keeping PR. The Council's over-all record as a lawmaker has been undistinguished to say the least, even when allowance is made for the limits placed on its powers. Its long and costly delay on county offices reform in its early years, its displays of political horseplay, its silly excursions into national and international affairs over which it had no jurisdiction, its conspicuous failure to take the lead, at least as a moral force, on such major matters as fare reform on city transit while occupying itself with such trivialities as the return of bingo and the name of Sixth Avenue -- these are a few of the symptoms of a body whose delays, antics and childishness have been criticized by the very civic elements that were the most ardent supporters of PR.

We shall discuss these and other points further in the days before election.

THE RECORD ON PR - II

five elections of the City Council have been held since adoption of Proportional Representation, and the results of those elections constitute a convincing reason for repealing the PR system. They demonstrate a failure of the City Council by its composition to reflect the will of the people, most conspicuously while Fusion forces were electing a Mayor and a majority in the Board of Estimate; they show radical representation in the Council entirely inconsistent with the real weight of radical views in the electorate. Candidates were elected from 1937 to 1945 as follows:

1937: Regular Democrats, 14; Independent Democrat, 1; Republicans, 3; American Labor Party, 6; City Fusion, 2. Thus democrats had fifteen members of a twenty-six member Council, elected on the same day that the late Mayor La Guardia, running on the American Labor Party ticket and the candidate also of the Republicans, Fusionists and Progressives, was swept into office again with a vot of 1, 344, 630 to 891, 255.

1939: Democrats, 14, Republicans, 2; American Labor Party, 2; Fusion, 2; Independent (Alfred E. Smith, Jr.), 1. This time the Democrats had won a two-thirds majority, or enough to override a La Guardia veto, in a Council of twenty-one.

1941: Democrats, 17 (one short of two-thirds to override veto); Republicans, 2; American Labor, 2; American Labor-Fusion, 1; Fusion, 2; right-wing Laborite, 1; Communist (Peter V. Cacchione), 1. There were twenty-six members of the Council.

1943: Democrats, 10; Republica (regular), 1; Republican independents, 2; Communists (Benjamin J. Davis, Jr., and Mr. Cacchione), 2; Independent (Michael J. Quill), 1; American Labor Party, 1, for a total of seventeen members.

1945: Democrats, 14; Republicans, 3; Liberals, 2; American Labor, 2; Communists, 2. This Council of Twenty-three members, elected for a four-year term for the first time contained such members as Mr. Cacchione, Mr. David, Eugene P. Connolly, and again Mr. Quill. That men of their political complexion should actually outnumber the Republicans in the Council and win almost a third as many seats as the strongly entrenched Democratic machine in New York City is an absurdity that calls for correction.

Of the election in 1937 Mayor La Guardia said: "Had there been no Proportional Representation vote, I could have carried an overwhelming majority in the City Council." PR rode in on the crest of a "reform" government, following the Seabury disclosures, and represented for many voters something tangible -- even if they couldn't fully understand it -- that might deal a blow to Tammany. This same desire for reform has provided most of the momentum in the few other cities in the United States where PR has been accepted and where it has usually been coupled with initiation of a city manager plan of government. But, worthy as the purpose was, the resulting City Council through the years has not been representative and its members -- with a few notable exceptions -- have been undistinguished. Some of them, whose views we regard as un-American, we stand a fair chance to get rid of by repealing PR.

One of the fallacious arguments used in defense of Proportional Representation is to summon up the prospect that we shall be returning to the "old Board of Aldermen composed of sixty-four Tammany Democrats and Joe Baldwin". That is not the case. The new system of electing the City Council ignores the old districts, and bases the election on the State Senate districts established by the Legislature. There are twenty-five of these in the city, and twelve of these Senate seats are now held by Republicans or Republican-American Laborites. It does not necessarily follow that the same party division would exist in a newly elected Council that exists in the New York City delegation to the Senate, but it seems a safe assumption that Republicans would be far better represented in the Council than they now are.

The boroughs are represented in the state Senate, under the election of November 5, 1946, as follows: Queens -- Republicans, 4; Kings County (Brooklyn) -- Republican, 1; Republican-American Labor, 3; Democrats, 2; Democrat-Liberal, 1; Democrat-American Labor, 1; Democrat-American Labor-Liberal, 1 (total, 9 seats); Richmond -- Republican, 1; New York County (Manhattan) -- Republican, 1; Democrat, 1; Democrat-American Labor, 3; Democrat-American Labor-Liberal, 1 (total seats, 6); Bronx -- Democrat, 3; Republican, 2 (total seats, 5).

In the State Senate delegation from New York City the parties are represented as follows: Republicans, 9; Republican-American Labor, 3; Democrats, 6; Democrat-American Labor, 4; Democrat-Liberal, 1; Democrat-American Labor-Liberal, 2.

The 1945 election produced a City Council of twenty-three members, divided as follows: Democrats, 14; Republicans, 3; Liberals, 2; American Labor, 2; Communists, 2.

Whatever the reason for it, it cannot be convincingly argued that the Republicans are fairly represented with three members in this Council of 23, or that Communists deserve two-thirds as many seats as Republicans. In the election of November, 1946, for state offices the Communists were running their own candidates for State Controller and Attorney General. The Communist vote for Benjamin J. Davis for Attorney General was 95,798, for Robert Thompson for State Controller, 85,098. The Communists estimated that something more than 5,000 of these votes came from outside the city.

So Communists, able to muster only about 90,000 votes in 1946 within the city at a major state election that brought out nearly 5,000,000 votes for Dewey and Mead, the candidates for Governor, were able in the 1945 City Council election here to elect 8.7 per cent of the Council membership. In the 1945 election for Mayor of New York City, 1,974,672 votes were cast by all parties. If the Communist vote for state offices in 1946 is set down beside this Mayoral total it makes 4.5 per cent of the vote as against a representation of 8.7 per cent of Communist members in the Council. The reasons for this discrepancy are, of course, the well-drilled techniques of the Communists in PR voting, their deals with other radical elements for second and later choices on the ballots, and the apathy of so many voters of other parties toward PR election of the Council.

All these facts contribute to our conviction that PR should be repealed, that an election of the City Council by State Senate districts carries little danger of a return to the old Aldermanic abuses.

One of the most serious objections to the Proportional Representation system of electing our City Council is that it fragmentizes the electorate into a number of splinter parties or independent candidacies based on shades of political opinion, racial loyalties, isms, or religious grounds. This is illustrated by the last Council election, in 1945, which seated fourteen Democrats, three Republicans, two Liberals, two American Laborites and two Communists. It is illustrated even more forcibly by a study of the full list of candidates in the five boroughs, which included -- in addition to the parties above -- Citizens Non-Partisan, City Fusion, Socialist, Trotskyist, American Veterans, Independent Citizens Committee and, in addition to these, no fewer than twenty-seven individuals running under no party designation.

In warning the voters against accepting PR in 1936 the late Alfred E. Smith said: "I believe that the whole theory of representing every minority on the city legislative body is wrong. I realize that it has great charm for those who want to break down the larger parties, encourage minorities and substitute free-for-all oratory and wrangling for orderly government.\*\*\*\*\* Party government as applied to municipal elections is a long way from perfect, but abolishing party government in favor of minority crackpot candidacies is going to be infinitely more irresponsible, especially when it is coupled with destruction of local district representation."

The extent to which fragmentation of the electorate occurred in that first PR election has been analyzed by Professor F.A. Hermens of Notre Dame University, one of the foremost students of PR. Using a table compiled by a State Constitutional Convention Committee appointed by Governor Lehman, he notes that on first choice votes for Council there was the following division of ballots: Democratic, 31 per cent; American Labor, 12 per cent; City Fusion, 11 per cent; Republican, 9 per cent; Insurgent Democrats, 5 per cent; Communists, 4 per cent; Socialists, 1 per cent, and "others" (independents), 27 per cent. This is fragmentation indeed.

"It was the same day," says Professor Hermens, "that Mayor La Guardia (who had been elected by a mere plurality in 1933) polled almost 60 per cent of the total vote cast in the city, the same day that Thomas E. Dewey was elected District Attorney of Tammany's own Borough of Manhattan with a majority of landslide proportions, and that Fusion elected, in addition to all the other members of the Board of Estimate, four of the five Borough Presidents of New York.\*\*\*\*\* When the results were known, the voters came to realize that the PR Council was the one point at which the Fusion landslide had been stopped."

The results in Council were, in members elected in a 26-member body, Democrats 50 per cent; American Labor 19 per cent; City Fusion 11½; Republicans 11½, and Insurgent Democrats 8 per cent. The lesson is that reform elements in the electorate, forgetting their differences and uniting their strength under the old-fashioned plurality system of voting, were able to keep their Fusionist Mayor in office by an increasingly substantial margin. Under PR their strength was dispersed and fragmented into splinter parties and independent candidacies, with a result that Democrats won half the Council seats and four other groups divided up the remaining thirteen. In four other elections held under PR while Mr. La Guardia was Mayor the Democrats never failed to win control of the Council, and once had the two-thirds needed to override a Mayoral veto.

1/5/47

## PR IS REPEALED

We believe the cause of sound government has been served in the passage of Proposition IV, by which New York City voters yesterday rejected the Proportional Representation system of electing the City Council.

PR had a full ten-year test. It did not live up to expectations. The Councils so elected did not truly reflect the political sentiment of the people. Democrats continued to dominate the Council at the same time that Fusion was electing and re-electing Mayor La Guardia, foe of Tammany.; Republican membership was confined to a smattering entirely inconsistent with the party's known strength among the electorate. Communists and other radicals won seats far beyond their just due because they had learned how to use PR and make deals to serve their ends.

The early hope that the electorate as a whole would finally become skilled in use of the ballot proved unjustified. The result finally was a Council splinterized as to parties, a sounding board for strange beliefs, a debating society given over to special pleaders and adoption of resolutions on national and international matters plainly outside the province of a local legislative body. With a few exceptions the members have been undistinguished. District representation was gone, under borough-wide election, and the electorate could not hope to know more than one or two of the candidates for whom they were voting. PR as a theory sounded good in some ways. The practical results in five elections so held were disappointing.

Now an entirely new system has been voted in, not returning to the old 65-member Board of Aldermen, but setting up a Council of twenty-five members elected on a neighborhood representation basis from State Senate districts. Those who supported repeal of PR in the interest of good local government have the further duty now to see to it that the new system actually brings good government. We invite all those forces, including many respected civic leaders, who supported PR in their sincere belief that it meant better government, to work with equal zeal now in the new effort to produce a better City Council. The Democrats have had sufficient warning in recent years to know that an aroused electorate, vigorously led, can turn them out of office in elections held on the old-fashioned majority basis, and keep them out for years, for failing to behave in the people's interest. That interest requires able men and women, and not party hacks, as nominees for the Council.

For the Republicans the repeal of PR means an opportunity and a challenge. Twelve seats in the city's delegation to the State Senate are now held by Republicans or Republican-American laborites, as against six regular Democrats and others with bi-party endorsement. If the Republicans will put up strong candidates for the Council and then take the trouble to see that Republican voters go to the polls they can insure a Council that at very least has a healthy and effective Republican minority.

## THE RESULTS ON PR

A study of the vote by which New York City repealed the Proportional Representation system of electing its City Council reveals some interesting points, especially when a comparison is made with the tests of other years on this same issue.

The sweep against PR went through all five boroughs, and through all but fifteen of sixty-seven Assembly districts. In the city as a whole PR won a little over 38 per cent of the vote cast, a very slender showing when it is considered that most Presidential elections are won on a swing of a few percentage points. PR was voted into effect in 1936 with 62 per cent of the votes cast, sustained in 1938 with 68 per cent, and again in 1940 with 58 per cent. The extent of disillusion of the voters with the results of PR seems to have been emphatically demonstrated.

An analysis of the registered electorate who went to the polls on this issue through the years is also significant. In 1936, 2,900,184 were registered to vote in New York City, in 1938, 2,423,976, in 1940 (a Presidential year) 3,390,460, and in 1947, 2,356,248, a huge registration for an off-year. In spite of the bad weather, 64 per cent of the registered voters took a position on PR day before yesterday, as against only 50 per cent in 1936, 46 per cent in 1938 (when there were 1,184,259 blank and void votes) and 40 per cent in 1940. This impressively large percentage of registrants who not only took the trouble to visit the polls on a rainy day but also cast their vote on the PR issue is evidence of how deep the feeling was. Those voicing an opinion on PR passed even the number of total voters in the city on the housing propositions, and came within about 60,000 of equaling the total vote on the veterans' bonus.

Three other cities that have used PR also voted Tuesday on its retention. Boulder, Colorado, which had it for thirty years, discarded the system by a vote of nearly three to one. Long Beach, N.Y., abandoned it, and the closeness of the vote in Cincinnati, where it won out, showed the substantial distrust of the system there.

We do not believe that the distrust so strongly registered in New York City will be lessened if a new test on the question is proposed next year.