

Queensland Branch's Submission to Electoral & Administrative Review Commission

The PRSA's Queensland Branch intends to make a submission to the EARC showing why and how a Hare-Clark system should be used for elections for Queensland's Assembly. Quite unproductively the Bill to establish the Commission has so far deliberately restricted it to the consideration of single-member electorates only. This pre-emption of the ability of the Commission to even examine multi-member proportional systems, which are well known to be fairer and more democratic than single-member systems, has been opposed by the Opposition Leader, Wayne Goss, although he has expressed no view yet on which system is the better. Our Queensland Branch has told the Fitzgerald Report Implementation Unit that the unnecessary clause excluding PR is outrageous and should be abandoned.

The daily torrent of erratic events in Queensland's Government must make even the dimmest of single-member electorate advocates wonder what has happened to their system's vaunted stability.

Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Some PRSA members have shown concern over the lack of impartiality evident in recent recommendations of the above committee relating to electoral broadcasting and its funding. Our members are not opposed to requirements for disclosure of donations, at least for large donations, but fear that proposals to disadvantage small parties in competing for broadcasting time, and to prevent supportive organizations from broadcasting in parties' favour during election campaigns is an attack on individual voters' rights. It would unfairly favour presently large parties at the expense of presently small ones.

On a brighter note, the Committee has invited the Society to make a submission to its Inquiry into the A.C.T. Electoral System. PRSA's National President has asked A.C.T. member Bogey Musidlak to be the Society's A.C.T. Spokesperson pending the admission of an A.C.T. Branch. Bogey has drafted the submission, entitled "Re-introduction of Effective Voting in the A.C.T. and Restoration of its Electoral System to National Pride of Place". The Canberra Times states that submissions from the *Australian Electoral Commission*, the *A.C.T. Division of the Liberal Party* and the *A.C.T.'s Fair Elections Coalition* each advocated that the Hare-Clark system should replace the Consolidated d'Hondt procedure.

The Society's comments on ACT matters will be taken over by the ACT Branch, subject to the PRSA's National Constitution, once the A.C.T. Branch has elected its Committee, provided a simple majority of PRSA members voting approve the admission of an A.C.T. Branch in the Constitutional ballot being conducted in conjunction with this mailing of Quota Notes.

Proportional Representation Overseas

The New Zealand Government has reneged on its promise of a referendum on whether a West German "mixed member" system should replace the present single member system. This retreat is probably linked to the Government's increasing instability - an ill that defenders of the present N.Z. system claim is not one of its failings. N.Z. reformers now have time to think more about the far better direct, quota-preferential PR instead. Dianne Hollister, MHA for Braddon, and new Tasmanian Green Independent, has told us that a fellow Green MHA, Dr Gerry Bates, helped recently when he spoke on Hare-Clark at a seminar in New Zealand.

Electoral Systems Paper Read at Royal Statistical Society

At Lord Kitchener's instigation, Dr I.D. Hill, a fellow member of the British Electoral Reform Society, sent the PRSA a copy of an interesting paper he read before the Royal Statistical Society, and had published in its Journal recently. Dr Hill is a descendant of Thomas Hill, whose suggestion in 1820 on a proportional election method helped pave the way for quota-preferential PR. The paper's opening paragraph reads:

"In its early days, one of the functions of this Society was to examine and discuss the numerical aspects of political questions, where they could be expressed without reference to party battles. It was not the Society's aim to involve itself in agitation over one solution or another to such questions, but merely to try to state the facts in as dispassionate a way as possible, leaving it to others to determine action. With this history, it is not surprising to find that papers have been read to the Society by two of the famous names in the field of electoral methods, namely Hare (1860) and Droop (1881). In the discussion after the second of these, Mr R. Biddulph Martin MP (in the Chair) said that the subject was one that "could not be too often discussed in such a Society as the Statistical Society of London", following which it does not seem to have been discussed (at a main meeting) from that day to this."

The paper [J. R. Statist. Soc. A(1988) 151, Part 2, pp. 243-275] includes discussion of Condorcet's method and STV, and a suggestion of a means of combining these. A copy is \$2.50 post free from the National President.

Recent Published Statements on Proportional Representation

The following pages show some recent statements made on PR. Mungo MacCallum's article is shown together with a response from the PRSA National President.

The article "How does the Senate Voting System work?" was part of an insert in certain Anglican and other church newspapers in Victoria by the Call to Australia Party, which has two MLCs in NSW. Its insertion prompted criticism within the churches as the CTA is a political party. We are non-party political, and include it here, as we support attempts to explain voting systems to people. The analogy of filling cups with a liquid is a good depiction of the principles of quota-preferential PR. We pointed out certain errors in the article to CTA.

The CTA's explanatory efforts, which also included a page on how votes are counted in single-member electorates, highlight the conspicuous dearth of public information efforts by the major parties, and by the Commonwealth and most State Governments, to educate electors in how their votes are counted. The W.A. Electoral Commission, with its newspaper inserts that preceded the last State election, is the recent obvious exception. Those inserts attracted favourable mention in the New Zealand Electoral Reform Coalition's recent Newsletter. The Australian Electoral Commission has shopfront offices around the nation, and could well use their presently blank, wasted front window space to prominently display informative explanations of our voting systems that could achieve wide exposure at little cost.

SA Branch Secretary, Deane Crabb, tells of a new book "Redressing the Balance" by Mr Ren DeGaris, a former Liberal Leader in the SA Upper House noted for his enlightened interest in electoral systems. He gives insights into the turbulent years with Steele Hall and Don Dunstan as premiers, and stresses that SA still lacks "one vote one value" for Assembly elections. He helped change Dunstan's Party List system for the Upper House to its present quota-preferential form. The book is \$8.00 post free from ERSSA, 11 Yapinga St, Plympton, SA 5038.

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Minorities can be too mighty

BEFORE the Tasmanian greens get too carried away with their undoubted political success, let's get a few facts on the record.

Very few people actually voted for them, and even under the peculiar Hare-Clark electoral system, which is specifically designed to favor minority parties, they only won a seventh of the parliamentary seats.

This was enough, however, for the Green Independents to decide who should form a government, and to exercise enormous influence in the policies of that government — policies which were determined after the election.

This may be fine for the greens and their sympathisers, who probably make up a much larger group than the people who actually voted for them; but it has to be disturbing for those of us who believe that the essence of democracy is that it means majority rule.

Any system of government is only as good as its worst government.

It is unlikely that the Labor Government headed by Michael Field will reach those depths, but it is even more unlikely that the result would have been received with so little bitterness if it had been determined by, say, a small vote for the Greater Tasmanian Slash and Burn Woodchip Development Party.

There is nothing to stop such a party contesting the election next time around.

This is not the first time a government has been formed only with the permission of a minority. In Tasmania a previous government depended on the vote of a putatively independent speaker.

In South Australia an obscure rural independent named Stott, who won his seat by just one vote, allowed the Liberals to form a government, and later crossed the floor to bring them down. And of course in 1975, so-called independents sided with the Opposition in the Senate to block supply and eventually cause the dismissal of the Whitlam Government.

Indeed, in the Senate, minority parties have held the balance of power for more than 30 years, with the exception of a brief period between 1975 and 1977.

This has given them power far beyond that to which their electoral support should entitle them. Whether they have exercised it responsibly or not depends on your point of view. The point is that the opportunity has always been there to misuse it.

It used to be a wry joke in Canberra that, during most of the seemingly endless Menzies regime, the minuscule DLP ran foreign policy; the Country

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POLITICS



Party, which in national terms commanded a vote that was scarcely larger, ran economic policy; the Liberal Party ran the lurks and perks; and the Labor Party, which invariably received the most votes, ran sweet damn all.

To be fair, it worked reasonably well; there were no riots in the streets, and the major parties accepted this rather odd arrangement with reasonably good grace. But it was hardly a shining example of democracy.

And, of course, the minority parties have a vested interest in preserving the system which allows them to wield such disproportionate influence.

The Country Party, now the National Party, held out for years against the idea of electorates of equal sizes, thus ensuring that the rural vote was effectively worth more than the urban vote.

The DLP, and now the Democrats, are equally vigilant in defence of preferential voting, and proportional representation in the Senate.

The most obvious way to limit, if not entirely destroy, their influence would be to introduce a universal system of first past the post voting, as is the case in Great Britain; but of course, no government could contemplate introducing such a reform. The minority parties would not let it.

Minority parties undoubtedly have a role to play in any democracy, if only to provide an outlet for people who from time to time get fed up with the major parties, or who feel particularly strongly about some issue which the major parties refuse to address.

They should certainly be able to exert pressure on the major parties and warn them when they are getting out of touch with the electorate. Whether they should have the power to make and unmake governments is a different matter.

The Tasmanian Greens have not set a precedent in this regard, but they are part of a dubious tradition.

They are quite correct in saying that the majority of voters did not want Robin Gray's Government to survive. But it is a great leap from that to assuming that what the majority of Tasmanians really wanted was a Labor Government, for whom even less people voted, with key policies decided by themselves for whom only a splinter group voted.

We need votes without bias

ON Mungo MacCallum's article "Minorities can be too mighty" (July 5): Is the ability of Tasmania's Green Independents to decide who should form a government and then to "enormously" influence its policies really "disturbing for those who believe the essence of democracy means majority rule"?

If a majority of voters had voted for the same party, that party would be governing alone. But the voters didn't go that way. The biggest party, the Liberal Party, attracted a minority, and under Tasmania's undistorting Hare-Clark electoral system it therefore got a corresponding minority of seats.

When no MPs would join the depleted Liberals, the proper alternative was for the remaining MPs, who jointly formed a majority, to decide whether they would work together to pass legislation and defeat any Opposition no-confidence motions. They have clearly and openly agreed to do this.

The statement that Hare-Clark is designed to favor minority parties is untrue. It neither favors nor disfavors them. It was Robin Gray's Government that repealed the Tasmanian Electoral Act and passed the present overhauled Act in 1985.

Why hanker for a non-proportional electoral system so that MPs supported by only a minority of voters can gain a majority of seats and impose their minority views on the majority of electors?

The abolition of first past the post voting in Australia by 1919 (in Queensland by 1960) was not enough to overcome the problem of governments elected by a minority of voters. Single-member electorates, even with equal enrolments, are no solution. Proportional representation, as in Tasmania, is needed.

Geoffrey Goode,
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How does the Senate Voting System work?

A senator is elected if he/she obtains a "quota" in the state in which he/she stands. A quota is calculated by dividing the total number of formal votes by the number of senators (plus 1) and adding one more vote to the quotient.

Victoria's 12 senators are elected for two four-year terms. Therefore six senators are re-elected each election. There are approximately 2.5 million formal voters, which makes a "quota" 357,144 votes.

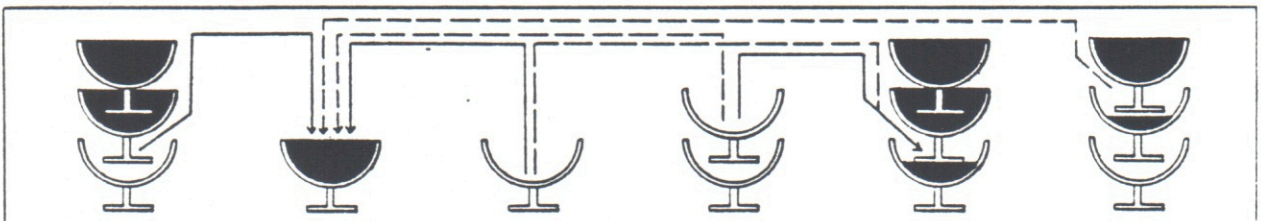
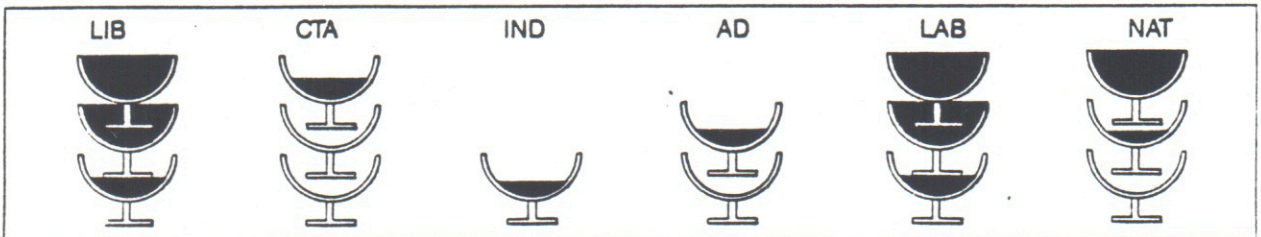
$$\frac{2,500,000}{6 + 1} + 1 = 357,144 = \text{quota}$$

All 12 would be standing in a full senate election making the quota approximately half the usual.

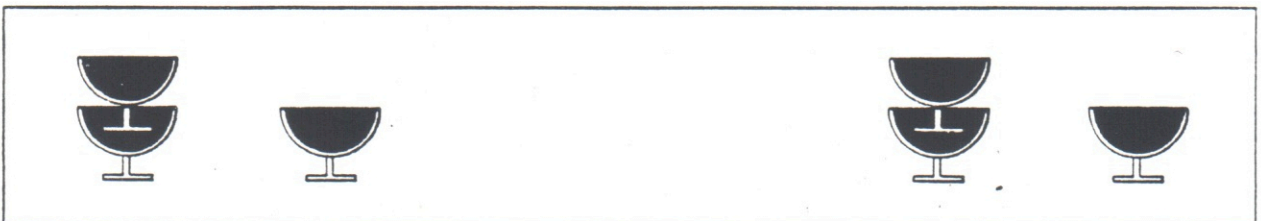
C.T.A. will have a senator in place when 358,000 Victorians support C.T.A. with a number **1** vote. OR If our candidates pick up the preferences of other parties, thereby reaching the quota.

Distribution of preferences occurs in a similar (but more complicated) manner to the State Preferential Voting System.

Parties will put forward a Senate ticket. The number **1** vote goes to the first candidate on the team . . . Once a quota is reached, a transfer value is calculated for the distribution of the surplus votes to the second candidate on the team. Again, once a quota is reached, a second senator is declared elected. Usually, the major parties get enough votes to elect two senators (2 quotas), so when the surplus votes going to the third member are not enough for a quota, they are again discounted by the transfer value and distributed according to the preferences. When this transferring of surplus votes is completed, the preferences of the candidates with the fewest votes are then distributed. At this stage, provided C.T.A.'s vote is greater than that of the other remaining parties, there is a good chance a seat could be won on the preferences distributed to C.T.A. from these sources.



With C.T.A. holding a greater number of votes than the Australian Democrat, Independent, National No. 2 and Labor or Liberal No. 3 candidate, then C.T.A. receives more votes as a result of distribution of preferences from the lesser contenders.



With C.T.A. still holding a lead on the Labor No. 3 at this stage, the distribution of preferences from Labor No. 3 goes to C.T.A. - C.T.A. then has a quota, a senator is in place!

Winning the seat is not the only way C.T.A. wins. When Christian-minded people place a number **1** beside our candidate, the major political parties do take notice. Placing that number **1** anywhere else is a lost cause. It is time people with sound moral standing, reflected their values by their vote.

Proportional Representation Society of Australia

NOMINATIONS FOR ELECTION OF NATIONAL OFFICE-BEARERS 1990-91

Under the PRSA Constitution, it is the turn this year for the Returning Officer for the above elections to be the Secretary of the South Australian Branch, Mr Deane Crabb. Nominations, for President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, which need be signed by the candidate only, as consent to the nomination, should be received by Mr Crabb at 11 Yapinga St, Plympton, SA 5038 by 31st October 1989.

Any candidate may submit a statement of up to one hundred words to the Returning Officer, who shall submit it to voters with the ballot-papers.

The two-year term of each office begins on 1st January 1990. If any poll is required, ballot-papers will be posted on 7th November 1989 and the poll will close on 14th December 1989. Results will appear in the December issue of "Quota Notes".

Supplement to "Quota Notes"

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