

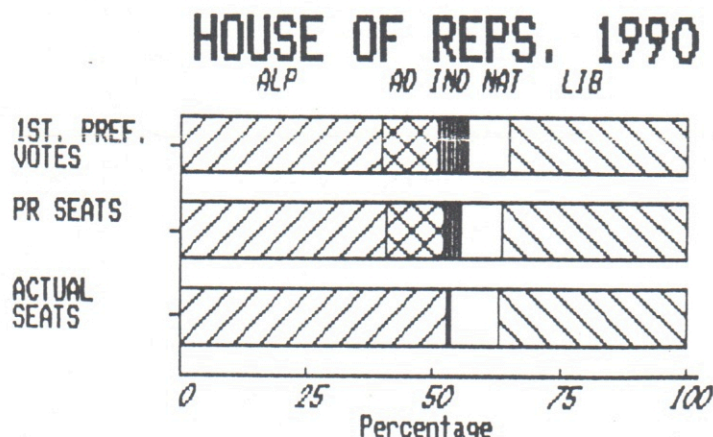
The House of Representatives Outcome under PR

If the PRSA's recommended system of multi-member divisions with PR had applied, the 1990 Federal Election would have given the ALP 60 of the 148 MHRs, and the Coalition 66 (Liberals 54, Nationals 12). The remaining seats would have been 17 for the ADs, 2 for the WA Greens, and 3 for independents.

The PR analysis was conducted by our NSW Branch Vice-President, Mr Ed Haber, who was also the Electoral Analyst and Research Officer for the only successful Independent - Mr Ted Mack, now MHR for North Sydney.

The ALP's share of first preference votes nation-wide fell to 39.5%, yet the party gained 52.7% of the seats. This was the lowest percentage first preference vote ever recorded for a party gaining an absolute majority of seats in the House of Representatives.

It was even more distorted than the 2nd House of Commons General Election in 1974 (QN No. 54), which gave under a first-past-the-post system UK Labour, with 39.3% of the vote, 50.2% of the seats. That highly distorted result was the only fully-contested election in Westminster's history where a party has ever won an absolute majority of Commons seats with less than 40% of the vote.



AUST. REPS. 1990	PERCENTAGES				
	ALP	AD	OTH	NAT	LIB
1ST. PREF. VOTE	39.5	11.2	5.9	8.4	35.0
PR SEATS	40.5	11.5	3.4	8.1	36.5
ACTUAL SEATS	52.7	0.0	0.7	9.5	37.1

The erosion of the ALP's share of the first preference vote was so severe that the electoral system's inbuilt distortion ability was only just sufficient to give the ALP government.

A report (*The Australian* 3rd May) on the possibly long term electoral plight of the ALP, by the Victorian Secretary of the Federated Clerks Union, Mr Lyndsay Tanner, recognized this. The following extracts are interesting:

"In December 1977 the ALP suffered a devastating loss in federal elections, polling below 40% of the primary vote for the first time in many decades."

"In March 1990 the ALP recorded a narrow victory in federal elections, polling a similar primary vote to that recorded in 1977."...

..."The protection provided to the ALP by the absence of proportional representation in most Australian parliaments may not last."

"Already the new forces are winning or seriously challenging in Lower House seats: if this trend gathers further momentum as it is likely to, the pressure to change the electoral system will become irresistible."

"The number of people who are active in the campaigns and activities of these new political forces is increasing rapidly, and likely to surpass the Labor equivalent in the near future."...

..."Ordinary people who actually think about politics feel taken for granted, and locked out of any real say in the political system".

"Most people do not want to spend much of their lives stacking branches and playing numbers games in the ALP: unfortunately that is precisely what they have to do in order to attain political voice and influence."

PR might be needed by the ALP to give it the option of Government in coalition with the Democrats, Greens or both after such elections, rather than risking Opposition which, as the ALP has found before can, once entered, be painfully long-term.

The ALP may start to consider that not only is majority government properly obtained only by an absolute majority of the first preference vote, but that it is easier to achieve after being in

Government (albeit in coalition) than in Opposition. The present Federal Government should have no trouble getting a bill for PR for the House of Representatives through the new Senate.

The distribution of multi-member divisions used for the above analysis is shown on Page 4. Also shown are details of the 22 "novel" MHRs that would have been elected under PR, and that would have represented large numbers of voters now unrepresented. These MHRs are described as "novel" because they were not in any of the categories of MHR in the previous House. Each of them was able to achieve the same quota of votes as the "non-novel" MHRs but, with the exception of Ted Mack, they did not have the same concentration of votes in a tiny area - that overrated criterion of worthiness so admired by defenders of single-member systems. Nevertheless Helen Caldicott, an Independent, and Meg Sampson, an AD, each came far too close for the comfort of the parties that are over-benefited by the existing system. Each nearly defeated a frontbencher.

Each of the nation's eleven 7-member divisions, and nine of its thirteen 5-member divisions would have elected a "novel" MHR. Two of the 7-member divisions would have each elected TWO "novel" MHRs. The NSW division comprising North Sydney, Mackellar and 5 other contiguous old-fashioned single-member divisions (Remember when they used to have those?) would have elected Ted Mack and an AD. The WA division comprising Fremantle, Swan and 5 other contiguous present divisions would have elected a WA Green and an AD.

The PRSA's 10-page analysis is available post free by request to the National President including three 41c postage stamps.

News from Victoria

The Guest Speaker at the 45th Annual General Meeting last month of the Society's Victorian Branch was the Hon. Evan Walker MLC who, until shortly before the meeting, had been the Leader of the Government in Victoria's Upper House. He recounted the Government's difficulties in convincing the Liberals in that House that Victoria should follow every other bicameral parliament in Australia in having PR as the method of election of at least one House.

The Liberals, and the Nationals, have also blocked Government moves to allow municipalities, following approaches to the Government by some of them, to have the option of introducing PR voting if they wished.

It is noticeable that the Liberal Parties in all the nearby States and Territories - NSW, SA, Tasmania and the ACT - that have actually experienced PR being used to elect a House and, except for the ACT, to elect municipal councils, have not developed the fear of the system that seems to afflict the Victorian Liberals.

The meeting also appointed its first Honorary Life

Member, Sir Ronald East. A former long-time Chairman of Victoria's State Rivers and Waters Commission, he has also been a long term Branch member and advocate of PR. He has spoken of moving a motion calling for PR elections at the 1931 Conference of the Nationalist (sic) Party in Ballarat.

Leave No Stone Unturned

The undemocratic method of filling Senate casual vacancies by Party nomination rather than by the direct provisional indication provided by the voters at the preceding General Election, as is an important feature of the Hare-Clark system, has been highlighted once again by the large number of Senate casual vacancies filled already this year.

The most conspicuous example of the unsatisfactory procedure of Section 15 of the Commonwealth Constitution was provided by ex-senator John Stone, when he publicly and vehemently declared his intention not to return to the Senate if his bid to gain a Lower House seat were to fail.

His bid did fail, but he soon lodged a formal nomination for the Senate position from which he had, only a short time earlier, resigned.

A large volume of public protest ensued, and an apparently embarrassed Mr Stone then decided to withdraw from the nomination process.

Under the Hare-Clark system this issue would not have arisen, as Tasmania's *Electoral Act 1985* [Section 231(3)] lists as one of the qualifications of candidates to fill Assembly casual vacancies the requirement that they were not elected at "the election to fill all the seats for that division last held before the vacancy occurred". The Act also requires, unless it is impracticable to fill the vacancy by the statutory re-examination of ballot-papers, that notice of the vacancy be published "in at least 2 newspapers circulating generally in the Assembly division concerned".

The first of those features should be included in an altered Section 15 of the Commonwealth Constitution in which the Hare-Clark procedure should be specified for all elections using a preferential voting system, and the second should be included in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act*.

The PRSA supported those enlightened Tasmanian senators that opposed the current version of Section 15 when it was proposed in 1977. Before 1977, casual vacancies were filled on a

temporary basis, and not necessarily until the end of the predecessor's term. The new procedure, initiated by the Fraser Government, was used for the first time to elect Austin Lewis, a Victorian colleague of Fraser's, to fill about 5 years of the term for which the late Senator Ivor Greenwood had been elected. Senator Lewis thus sat in Federal Parliament, for about two terms of the House of Representatives, before he was elected by the voters.

John Stone was not the only senator elected till June 1993 that has resigned this year. Former long term senators Chaney, Haines and Messner were replaced by their Party Machines by people that the voters, whom the new senators should be representing, were not consulted about - not even a statutory notice in a newspaper telling them what was going on!

Hare-Clark Contribution Recognized in ACF Magazine

An article in the April issue of the Australian Conservation Foundation's magazine "Habitat Australia" entitled "Meet the Greens" made favourable mention of the role of the Tasmanian electoral system in the success of the Green Independents there.

The article said, "...at the time of Federation, a couple of Irishmen were charged with the responsibility of devising the state's political structures and voting system. The result was the fair but complicated, typically Irish, Hare-Clarke (sic) electoral system. Tasmania is the only state with such a system, so the Greens' success is unlikely to be repeated on the mainland where state electoral systems inherently favour major parties."

The PRSA is not aware of who these Irishmen were supposed to be. Thomas Hare was a mid 19th Century London barrister and Andrew Inglis Clark (not very Irish names - Clark's surname is not spelt in the Irish manner with an "E") was born and educated in Hobart. Clark persuaded Sir Edward Braddon, the then Premier, to introduce - in 1896, the year before Clark ceased to be Attorney-General - the legislation that applied the Hare-Clark voting system to Tasmania.

As the use of PR to elect the Dail Eireann, the Lower House of the Parliament of Eire, did not take place until 1921, and then under Westminster's Government of Ireland Act 1920, it would be more reasonable to say that Eire began using the typically Tasmanian Hare-Clark system, although the basic system of PR used in both of these cases, known in England as the single transferable vote, did originate in England.

The article erred in describing Hare-Clark as "fair but complicated". It is as uncomplicated as it is possible for an electoral system to be without ceasing to be fair. There are far more complicated PR systems (e.g. that for the Senate) that are less fair.

It is not quite true to say that the Greens' success is unlikely to be repeated on the mainland as:

- (a) every mainland Upper House, except Victoria's, has a PR system, and
- (b) in the ACT the Greens could be part of the Government, because the ACT Assembly is elected by a form of PR.

The conservation movement should put more emphasis on pressing for PR in Australia's other Lower Houses, and not just rely on the efforts of an enlightened 19th Century Tasmanian, or even the supposed "pair of Irishmen".

Conservation bodies such as the ACF itself, and the Victorian Division of the National Trust, have for some time now had postal ballots by quota-preferential PR embodied in their constitutions as the method by which their Councils are to be elected.

Sesquicentenary of the First PR Election for a Public Body

The first election in Australia for a group of members of a public body is believed to have occurred in 1840, when the Adelaide City Council was elected under a Municipal Bill that had incorporated a PR mechanism at the suggestion of Rowland Hill, the then Colonization Commission's Secretary. The great PR advocate Catherine Helen Spence, whose father was Adelaide's Town Clerk then, witnessed it as a girl. It is also believed that this was the first time in the world that PR had been used to elect a public body.

Dr I. Hill, Mr Hill's direct descendant, is a member of the British Isles ERS (See QN No. 55).

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Distribution of Multi-member Divisions by State & Territory

MHRs/ DIVISION	DIVISIONS (MHRs)								AUSTRALIA
	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	
7	3(21)	4(28)	2(14)	2(14)					11(77)
5	6(30)	2(10)	2(10)		2(10)	1(5)			13(65)
3					1(3)				1(3)
2							1(2)		1(2)
1								1(1)	1(1)
TOTALS	9(51)	6(38)	4(24)	2(14)	3(13)	1(5)	1(2)	1(1)	27(148)

**"Novel" MHRs (not in categories
in the previous House of
Representatives) that would
have been elected under PR:**

MHR (19 were each from one of the Groups below - 3 were Independents)	MULTI-MEMBER DIVISION COMPRISING: (strongest present division for each "Novel MHR" on this list is named first)	NO. OF COMBINED PRESENT DIVISIONS	STATE	QUOTAS OF FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES RECEIVED FOR GROUP
An Aust. Democrat	Bowman etc.	7	QLD	1.04
" " "	Ryan etc.	7	"	1.03
" " "	Fisher etc.	5	"	0.61
" " "	Herbert etc.	5	"	0.56
" " "	Kingston etc.	5	SA	1.13
" " "	Bonython etc.	5	"	0.87
" " "	Melbourne etc.	7	VIC	1.21
" " "	La Trobe etc.	7	"	1.15
" " "	Isaacs etc.	7	"	1.03
" " "	Burke etc.	7	"	0.92
" " "	Gippsland etc.	5	"	0.60
" " "	Mackellar, N.Sydney etc.	7	NSW	1.00
" " "	Sydney etc.	7	"	0.79
" " "	Cunningham etc.	5	"	0.77
" " "	Banks etc.	7	"	0.69
" " "	Mitchell etc.	5	"	0.65
" " "	Fremantle, Swan etc.	7	WA	0.71
A WA Green	Swan, Fremantle etc.	7	"	0.89
" " "	Brand etc.	7	"	0.72
Ted Mack	N.Sydney, Mackellar etc.	7	NSW	-
Helen Caldicott	Richmond etc.	5	"	-
Leigh Maughan	Newcastle etc.	5	"	-