

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA — NSW BRANCH

QUOTA NOTES NO 15

SEPTEMBER 1979

Your Officebearers

At the Annual Meeting on 31 May, eight members were elected to the Branch Committee and at the following Committee Meeting, the individual officebearers were appointed. The Committee is as follows.

President	Mr J.F.H. Wright
Vice-Presidents	Mr J.T. Webber, Mr E.W. Haber
Secretary	Mr J. Randall
Treasurer	Mr J.T. Webber
Members of Committee	Miss M. Pillinger, Mrs K.M. Wright, Mr K.J. Baglin, Mr J. Bonwick

Tasmania

Once again, the Hare-Clark method has proved itself accurate and reliable in the election of Tasmania's House of Assembly. In the election held on 28 July, voters in all five electoral districts had a choice of at least seven candidates of each of the two major parties as well as other candidates. Over the State as a whole, 79.3% of the voters saw the election of their first-preference candidates and 95.6% will be represented either by their first preferences or other Members closely associated with their first preferences. In every district, well over 70% saw the election of the candidates they supported.

The ALP, with 54.3% of the votes, had 20 of its candidates elected and the Liberal Party, with 41.3%, won the other 15 seats. Two women were elected, both in the same electorate, Bass. One Minister was not re-elected and was replaced by another candidate of his own party and another two Members were replaced by others from their own parties. Altogether, there are seven new Members in the House of 35.

PR in the Australian Capital Territory

Another recent demonstration of the effective representation given by the quota-preferential method was the election of the ACT House of Assembly on 2 June. Each of the House of Representatives districts Canberra and Fraser returns nine Members to the House of Assembly. Both Labor and the Liberal Party won seats in both districts as did the Australian Democrats and Independents. The result was ALP 8 seats, Liberal Party 4 seats, Democrats 2, and Independents 4.

Norfolk Island

The Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly was elected by the quota-preferential method on 1 August. Unfortunately, the method was introduced without adequate explanation and there was some suspicion about its fairness. The result should have dispelled any doubts. Voters whose first-preference candidates were elected amounted to 81.2% and a further 10.4% saw the election of their second-preference candidates. The Norfolk Islander, which carried an Editorial expressing doubts about the desirability of the method before the election, commented afterwards 'Our first Legislative Assembly, the beginning of a new era in Norfolk Island's history, comprises a wide range of beliefs and personalities - and maybe in the long term this is one of the benefits of Proportional Representation voting.'

Democrats Promise Cooperation

The National Council of the Australian Democrats recently resolved to cooperate with the Proportional Representation Society of Australia in a campaign to increase public knowledge of proportional representation. Some collaborative activities have already been arranged in Victoria. The Democrats themselves held a public meeting in Darwin early in August to launch a campaign. Your NSW Branch Committee has nominated representatives to meet appropriate people from the Democrats in the near future.

Citizens For Democracy

On 27 June, Citizens For Democracy arranged a meeting in the Tom Mann Theatre to discuss a possible Bill of Rights for New South Wales. The two introductory addresses were given by Frank Wlaker, NSW Attorney-General, and Carolyn Simpson, President of the NSW Council for Civil Liberties. Mr Walker based his talk on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Among other things, he referred to the requirements in the Declaration for allowing people to take part in government through 'freely chosen representatives'. He stressed the importance of the 'one-vote-one-value' principle. In reply to a question, he admitted that the method of election of the NSW Legislative Assembly prescribed in the amending Act passed earlier this year would not ensure one-vote-one-value and agreed that a proportional method with multi-member electorates would. He said that he thought the people of New South Wales would need to be educated to accept a change from single-member districts. The Society would be most grateful for any help the NSW Government would give us in our educational work.

Catherine Helen Spence - Pioneer in Electoral Reform

The Adelaide Advertiser of 17 July had on its Education page an excellent article on the life and achievements of Catherine Helen Spence. The author was Mrs H.P. Jones, Lecturer in History at Hartley College of Advanced Education. The article recorded how in 1861 Catherine Spence produced a pamphlet entitled 'A Plea for Pure Democracy' in which she proposed the use of Hare's method of proportional representation for South Australia. She worked untiringly for proportional representation until her death in 1910 at the age of 84. The House of Assembly electoral district Spence was named after her.

In a follow-up letter in the Advertiser of 23 July, Mr Deane Crabb, Secretary of the Electoral Reform Society of South Australia, pointed out that, among other things, Miss Spence founded the Electoral Reform Society. He wrote 'The Society has continued Catherine Helen Spence's fight for a fair and effective electoral system. If we are to achieve true democracy and get anywhere near the ideal of "one vote, one value", proportional representation and multi-member electorates must be introduced as the system used to elect SA's House of Assembly. This would be a much more fitting tribute to Catherine Helen Spence than naming the single-member electorate of Spence after her.'

Publications

Some readers of Quota Notes may not be aware of other publications of the Society. The Proportional Representation Manual contains a set of rules for counting elections by the quota-preferential method. The rules are designed to be used for elections of all sizes, from clubs and societies to Parliaments. The Manual also contains two worked examples and practical guidance for returning officers. It is available at \$3. There is also an economy version with the scrutiny sheets for the examples at reduced size. It costs \$1. Scrutiny sheets are also available at 10c each. A booklet showing the differences between various methods of election and the superiority of the quota-preferential method is 'Your vote - effective or wasted?'. It costs 30c. In all cases, the cost of postage is additional. There are reductions for quantity purchases.

Wanted

If you have a copy of 'Proportional Representation' by C.G. Hoag and G.H. Hallett, or of 'Proportional Representation' by John H. Humphreys, that you would be prepared to sell, will you please let the Secretary know, or phone 498 5559.

Proportional Representation Society of Australia - NSW Branch

Box 3058, Sydney, NSW 2001

President J.F.H. Wright Telephone 498 5559

Honorary Secretary J. Randall Telephone 90 4951

Quota Notes is registered for postage as a publication Category B.