

President's Convalescence

All members and friends will be relieved to hear that our President, Jack Wright, is reported to be making a steady recovery to full health after a bad turn on the morning of what was to be Jack and Katie's first day in the Warrumbungle Ranges on holidays following Jack's retirement last August. The thought of climbing those mountains proved too much for Jack and instead he finished up spending his three weeks holidays in Coonabarabran Hospital (where he was heard to be making overtures to the local country folk regarding the merits of PR).

Undeterred by the experience and overwhelmed by the country hospitality, Katie and Jack have declared their intentions to try again for a further assault on the Warrumbungles sometime in the future.

Triumph For Reason

A recent attempt by councillors on the Sutherland Shire Council to convert from a system of three five-member ridings to five three-member ridings was thwarted (until after the next election, at least) by the timely intervention of our President (prior to his illness) at the request of a determined and enthusiastic group of local activists opposed to the proposed change. They argued convincingly of the dangers of dilution to proper representation on the Council and approached the PR Society to intercede by way of an appeal to the Council and the affected councillors, backed by a local press campaign. As well as writing to Council, Jack Wright spoke personally to the two independent councillors whom it was hoped might not be as fixed in their ideas and therefore amenable to change. At least one independent was sufficiently convinced of the merits of the existing system. When a rescission motion concerning this matter was brought on at the Council meeting of October 8, reason triumphed on the shire President's casting vote and further consideration of the proposed alteration to the electoral system has been deferred till after the next local government elections due in September next year

Tasmania

There has been much debate and activity concerned with the electoral laws of Tasmania emanating from the Apple Isle since the last State Election held on July 28. Fortunately the discussion does not entail any alteration to the highly successful Hare-Clark system which has been in operation in Tasmania since 1907; but further refinements to the existing electoral laws designed to eliminate any anomalies.

The most recent amendment to the Electoral Act to come before the Tasmanian Parliament is designed to overcome the phenomenon of the 'donkey vote'; or at least spread it evenly amongst all candidates within a group so as to obviate any particular candidate being the beneficiary of the 'donkey vote'. This is achieved by printing several different ballot papers with the various names within each group rotated to produce a different order on each separate print run. An interesting side-effect resulting from the random distribution of ballot papers forwarded to each polling booth is that the design of any how-to-vote cards is rendered well nigh impossible.

The other significant development involves the setting-up of a commission of inquiry into limitations upon electoral campaign expenditure following in the wake of a series of charges laid for exceeding the existing \$1500 limit at the recent election.

South Australia

The 'Bulletin' magazine dated November 20, 1979, included an analysis by Dean Jeansch of the recent South Australian elections entitled 'Last SA Election Greatest Landslide for 40 years'. The article included the following paragraph: "The results of the 1977 and 1979 elections confirm that any electoral system,

even one based on equi-population districts as in South Australia, which utilises single-member electorates, can produce results which deviate from an ideal 'match' of votes and seats. Overall, then, for the first time since 1857, the election system is no longer an issue in South Australian politics."

The last sentence is most unfortunate following so closely on the heels of the previous sentence containing an admission of a deficiency in the existing system despite 'equi-population districts', i.e., an acknowledgement of the absence of proportional representation. It is somewhat distressing to find recorded in print the fact that mankind (at least the political variety) doesn't strive for perfection after all!

The Upper House voting method currently operative in SA is a step closer to the ideal to the extent that representation is determined under a so-called PR method, but not advocated by this Society for the reason that it is based upon the defective 'List System'. While the outcome of the Legislative Assembly election has been well publicised, the result of the Legislative Council election hasn't received nearly as much coverage. The current composition of the Upper House is comprised as follows: 11 Liberal, 10 Labor, one Australian Democrat, with the latter holding the balance of power. Hopes are high that an earlier proposed reform of the voting system for the Upper House (refer Quota Notes No.13) but which failed for lack of support by the then Government will be reintroduced and, with the support of the Australian Democrats, pass both Houses.

#### Workshop on Proportional Representation

While on the subject of the Australian Democrats, the Society recently conducted a workshop in conjunction with the Democrats entitled 'Voting Methods and Representative Parliaments'. The workshop was held at the El Rancho, North Ryde, on Sunday November 18, an all-day affair which proved fruitful for the planning of further workshops along similar lines in the future. Naturally, the Society is willing to work in harness with any other organisation expressing a mutual interest in such a venture.

#### 'MO' Awards

The Society has become involved with voting of a different ilk with its undertaking of the task of acting as Returning Officer for the annual Variety Artistes' 'MO' Awards for which all Guild members are eligible to vote. The voting is split into two stages as with the Academy Awards—initially the nomination stage in which the counting procedure reduces each of the twelve categories to five nominations for subsequent voting by the alternative preferential method in the final stage of the ballot to determine a single winner for each category.

The procedures followed in the initial stage has been refined considerably from the practices of preceding years by the introduction of an element of PR, which is only to be expected with the Society involved for the first time. The Society was contacted regarding the conduct of this rather extensive ballot following a degree of dissatisfaction expressed on the part of some Guild members about the earlier voting system (i.e. the block voting system). The interest in voting methods expressed by the Guild reflects highly on the awareness of Guild members and the Entertainment Industry generally. It is a pity other organisations can't follow this lead!

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

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