

FOUNDERS OF OUR
ELECTORAL SYSTEM

THOMAS HARE (1806—91)

Thomas Hare was born in England on 28 March 1806. He studied law, was admitted to the Bar in November 1833 and published several works on judges' decisions. In 1853 he became Inspector of Charities and was later Assistant Commissioner on the Royal City Charities Commission, about which he published several books. He was a Conservative Party member who resigned from public life in 1846.

Hare was said to have been 'conspicuous for great industry - to have wide interests in life and clearness of intellectual vision'. He was a member of the London-based Political Economy Club and the British *Dictionary of National Biography* says of him:

'Hare's energies were concentrated in an attempt to devise a system which would secure Proportional Representation of all classes in the United Kingdom, including minorities in the House of Commons and other electoral assemblies.'

His original electoral system ideas included making England one huge electorate (later he changed this to seven or eight hundred electorates) and that each voter would sign and check his vote. By 1873, however, he had adapted his ideas to take account of the secret vote. Under Hare's method,

simply dividing the vote by the number of seats constituted the quota and then the surplus was expected to be distributed 'at random'.

Hare's famous original work *Machinery of Representation* appeared in 1857 (in two editions) and many editions of his equally famous *Treatise on the Election of Representatives: Parliamentary and Municipal* appeared between 1859 and 1873. In the preface to the fourth edition he stated his belief that proportional representation would '... end the evils of corruption, violent discontent and restricted power of selection or voter choice'. A great deal of writing on this theory developed and several societies were formed worldwide for its adoption, although Hare pointed out that his scheme was not meant to bear the title 'representation for minorities'. Moreover, he noted in the preface to his third edition a point that was to become a feature of Tasmanian politics:

'Can it be supposed that the moment the electors are allowed a freedom of choice they will immediately be seized with a desire to vote for some distant candidate with whom they are unacquainted, rather than for those whom they know - who are near to them, whose speeches they have heard and who have personal recommendations to the favour and respect of the town and neighbourhood.'

Finally, with the help of contemporaries such as John Stuart Mill and Catherine Helen Spence, Hare popularised the idea of proportional representation worldwide. The permanent recognition of his name in the Tasmanian system is perhaps appropriate despite little being left of his original proposals. His death in May 1891 occurred several years before the first use of proportional representation in Tasmania in 1897.



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ANDREW INGLIS CLARK (1848—1907)

Andrew Inglis Clark was born in Hobart on 24 February 1848 and, due to ill health, was at first educated by his mother. Eventually he qualified as a mechanical engineer and worked in his family's business before studying law and being admitted to the Tasmanian Bar in January 1877. He was a founding member of a group of Hobart-based intellectuals called the Minerva Club and the editor of their monthly magazine, *Quadrilateral*. In November 1874 it contained an unsigned article (attributed by a colleague, William Burns, to Clark) on the benefits of proportional representation as described by Thomas Hare.

In 1878 he was first elected unopposed to the House of Assembly to represent Norfolk Plains (1878-82); later South Hobart (1887-97), and finally Hobart (1897-98). However after winning his first election he failed at his next three attempts. Perhaps it was these failures which spurred him on to co-found, in 1884-85, the Southern Tasmanian Political Reform Association, which aimed to win manhood suffrage and three-year parliaments. Nevertheless, when re-elected in 1887 he was immediately made Attorney-General in Premier Sir Phillip Fysh's new Cabinet. Because Fysh was in the Legislative Council, Clark was the most senior government member in the House of Assembly.

Clark visited the USA in 1890 and became a committed republican and 'friend of America': that is, of its citizens - e.g. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jnr - and of its political institutions. This bias led him to be a force in the movement towards the Federation of the Australian States, for which he prepared a draft which formed the basis of the Australian Constitution and later a textbook, published in 1901.

In 1896, after several failed attempts, Clark was able to get a system of proportional representation adopted by the Tasmanian Parliament, but it was to be only on a trial basis for both Hobart (to elect 6 MPs) and Launceston (to elect 4 MPs). When writing about the 'Clark-Hare' system R.M. Johnston in his *Observations on the working results of the Hare System of Election in Tasmania* (1897) places on record the fundamental reason Clark's name is still used today:

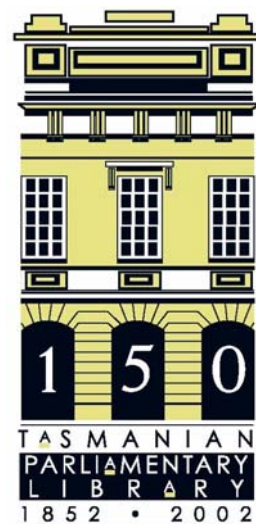
'The specific modification introduced by Mr A I Clark, Attorney-General for Tasmania, is the provision devised by him for eliminating the element of chance in the selection and distribution of quota-excesses or surplus transfer votes.' (p.13)

The provision described as Clark's own was to transfer all votes to 'next order of preference', rather than a random sample. This first 'Hare-Clark system', as it was immediately known, was renewed annually until suspended in 1902 and then finally re-introduced for the whole State in 1907.

Clark, never in robust health, died at his home 'Rosebank' in Battery Point on 14 November 1907, just as permanent proportional representation struggled through Parliament and over a year before it was used for the first time throughout Tasmania at the general election in April 1909. The system still bears his name, which is a monument to his enduring advocacy of proportional representation. His own words, in an Australian Senate paper in 1901, were that the:

'Clark-Hare system ... enables every section of political opinion which can command the requisite quota of votes to secure a number of representatives proportionate to its numerical strength'.

He had been appointed a judge of the Supreme Court in 1901; assisted in the foundation of the University of Tasmania in 1889 and was its Vice-Chancellor from 1901 to 1903. He was a staunch republican and advocate of women's rights, and the first public figure to advocate elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage, or the right of all adults to an equal vote.



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