

# THREAT TO DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS AND SITE VALUE RATING IN VICTORIA

Extracts from a Speech on Local Government (Elections) Bill by Hon. R. M. Hallam  
MLC, National Party member for Western Province and Opposition Shadow  
Minister for Local Government.

Legislative Council Hansard 7th April  
1992.

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"Today's municipal council, even the most conservative and traditional, is a long way removed from the earlier profile. We have and expect services that go way beyond the classification of property services and well into the realm of what are now euphemistically known as human services.

In addition, a substantial proportion of the revenue derived by individual councils, indeed if not the majority of that revenue is now raised from general tax sources rather than rate revenue and it is pertinent to note that the share of tax revenue as opposed to rate revenue in general terms is increasing.

Therefore, in that context the debate has shifted sideways. Of course, there is still a great deal of interest as to how we arrange the sharing of the rate burden and such issues as the merit of replacing the minimum rate with the municipal charge is widely debated as it goes to the issue of sharing that rate burden.

Another instance of that fact is that the Victorian Farmers Federation is pushing strenuously (**Editorial:** and also the Municipal Association of Victoria) right now to have Parliament revisit the implied net annual value that is included in the law of the land because that again would go to the basis upon which the rate burden is shared".

**Editorial:** Mr. Hallam has told TRA's President that the National Party is adamant that differential rating must be introduced in Victoria. As this appears to require the Capital Improved Value Rating System, the Coalition could well repeal the provisions in the Local Government Act which ensure the retention of Site Value Rating through rating polls.

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"... The Coalition does not accept that proportional representation is necessarily fairer than any other system. It does not agree that it is necessarily better to have candidates elected by a sectional vote ...

More importantly, each selected candidate under the exhaustive preferential system must have the support of the majority of the electors. That is a fundamental issue and it at least raises as debatable the claim by the government that proportional representation is fairer."

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"If simplicity and speed of determining an outcome are to be the criteria on which we judge the various election processes, the most appropriate system could be that of equal value voting, as that system has no preferences, but the electors vote only for the number of candidates to be elected; they simply place ticks or crosses in the boxes alongside sufficient of the candidates to fill the vacancies."

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"That system is used very widely indeed in New Zealand, in local government in the United States of America; and ... in Great Britain. It is also used in Queensland".

**Editorial Comment: Supporters of PR and Site Value Rating have been warned that their cherished beliefs are under grave threat.**

For over three decades Mr. Nick Renton, Fellow of the prestigious Faculty of Actuaries and one of Australia's foremost authorities on electoral systems, has been urging the adoption of PR in the interest of electoral justice. Mr. Renton's authoritative reference: Guide to Meetings and Organizations is now in its fifth edition. Copies are available from the Law Book Company priced \$22. TRA members are urged to arm themselves with copies of the Guide for Voluntary Associations and especially refer to Chapter 11, Election Systems and Appendix 3: Examples showing anomalies of various

election systems.

Advocates of defective election systems must be forced to justify their choice before the voters to explain the reasons behind their support of such systems.

The General Council for Rating Reform is reprinting copies of its many excellent pamphlets extolling the virtues of Site Value Rating. Please write to the Secretary, Box 955G, GPO Melbourne, Vic. 3001, requesting copies for distribution among opinion leaders in your Municipality and State Electoral District.

In a referendum on Saturday 19 September 1992, the New Zealand voters overwhelmingly rejected the first-past-the-post system, greatly preferring a proportional representation system.