

APPENDIX: MY OBITUARY

The following obituary appeared on page 18 of *The Canberra Times* for Saturday 16 September 2017 under the heading “Father of Hare-Clark in Canberra”. It was printed to include a photo of Bogey together with the Legislative Assembly. That picture of the chamber was described as “Boguslaw Czeslaw Musidlak is responsible for how the ACT Legislative Assembly is made up.” The full obituary under my name reads as follows:

Boguslaw Czeslaw Musidlak was born in Adelaide on 11 September 1953. I knew him as a Canberra resident since 1976. He had a Polish father and a Ukrainian mother who met at a forced labour camp in Germany during World War II. He was understated, and regarded as rather eccentric in his habits. He was, however, a very hard worker. In Canberra, he was universally known as Bogey. Although he visited my house I never went to his dwelling in Narrabundah. His sister tells me he was a hoarder – but also a genius, as hoarders so often are.

Musidlak’s main achievement was installing the Hare-Clark electoral system as the means whereby Canberrans elect members of the ACT Legislative Assembly. While perhaps a dozen people could claim credit for the ACT version of Hare-Clark, it would be surprising if any of them would deny Musidlak the title of “father of Hare-Clark in Canberra”. Where he differed from the rest of us is that we others were interested in getting self-government per se; the voting system didn’t matter too much. By contrast, Musidlak was working on a strategy to ensure that the electoral system was Hare-Clark.

If I live to an age that permits me to write a history of Australian electoral reform during the last quarter of the 20th century, I would write that the installation of Hare-Clark in the ACT was by far the best development in that period, deserving of a special chapter of the book. The ACT chapter would be titled *Miracle at Canberra*. Musidlak’s strategy worked that miracle.

The Proportional Representation Society of Australia has existed in various forms for a century but only became a national organisation in 1982. Its national presidents have been Jack Wright (1982-85), Geoff Goode (1985-94), Bogey Musidlak (1994-2017) and now Jeremy Lawrence, who is president as a consequence of Musidlak’s death. Yet there was something peculiar about Musidlak that I never understood. In his many letters to the editor of *The Canberra Times* about Hare-Clark, he would always describe himself as “convener” of the society’s “ACT branch”, not as national president. Perhaps that is the best example of his understatedness.

This obituary should be about Musidlak not me, but I cannot help myself at this point. Readers of *The Canberra Times* would know of my loathing for the present Senate voting system. That loathing has led me to write the book *Unrepresentative Swill* for which the sub-title would be *Australia’s Ugly Senate Voting System*. Five chapters are written so far, which I have sent to various people. The only one who went to great trouble to help was Musidlak, a fact that impressed me yet again as to his hard-working nature.

The last e-mail I have from him was received at 5.57pm on Wednesday 27 August in which, after providing me with important facts about proportional representation, he apologised for not doing more on account of his “preparations for a week’s visit to Adelaide”. I was told he had a very pleasant stay in Adelaide but died on the flight back to Canberra. His death was a shock to me and was correctly described as “sudden”.

This obituary should be about Musidlak not psephology, but again I can't help myself. By that I mean why, in private conversation, I have described the ACT version of Hare-Clark as "the Hare-Clark-Robson-Musidlak electoral system". There is an important difference between the Tasmanian version of Hare-Clark (in operation continuously since 1909) and that in the ACT, where it has operated since 1995. In the ACT a single first preference for a candidate counts as a formal vote. In Tasmania that has never been the case. In 1909 and for many years thereafter, the elector was told: "Your vote will not count unless you number at least three squares." Today, the elector is told: "Your vote will not count unless you number at least five boxes."

I shall not bore readers as to why the ACT chose to make that difference. All I can say is that Musidlak's influence explains it and all manner of ACT politicians and party officials here could explain it. Likewise, I shall not explain here why I always disagreed with Musidlak about it. However, since it was he, rather than me who worked the "Miracle at Canberra", I was willing to defer to him on the matter. He persuaded the Legislative Assembly that it should be done his way and he succeeded in his persuasion.

The first I knew of Musidlak's death was when I picked up a Saturday *Canberra Times* and saw his death notice. As he died on 27 August it will probably turn out to be the case that his last e-mail exchanges were with me. As soon as I read that death notice I rang various people in psephological circles and the word spread around. The first blogger to respond was Malcolm Baalman, who sent me his obituary titled: "In memoriam: leading Australian electoral reformer passes away." Since that obituary contains information well known here but not around the world, I shall not repeat the points Baalman has made, which are well known in Canberra. Musidlak's funeral was held last week.

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