Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 29 APRIL 1874

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 29 April, 1874.

Elections Bill.

ELECTIONS BILL.

Upon the question being put—That this Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. MORGAN said, he thought the honorable member for the Leichhardt, who had on the previous evening moved the adjournment of the debate upon the Bill, would have risen to address the House; but as the honorable member had not done so, he merely rose for the purpose of saying that he should support the Bill, as he considered it would be the best legislation that had yet been brought forward on the subject of elections. He considered that there was no part of it better than that which provided for the secrecy of the ballot, by rendering it compulsory for presiding officers to seal up the ballot papers without examining them; and that in itself was a good reason why he should support the second reading.

Mr. ROYDS said that he had not risen to address the House, as he had waited until honorable members had been provided with copies of the Bill, and also because he noticed the honorable member for Warwick was extremely anxious to speak. It was not his intention to oppose the second reading of the Bill, and he thought it was one of those measures which should be dealt with in a friendly way by honorable members on both sides of the House. He must say, at the same time, that he considered the present Elections Act had been rather hardly dealt with, as he could not see how a Bill that proposed to so thoroughly alter the system of elections in the colony could be fairly tested by the experience of one general election, more particularly in the country districts, where people took some time to be educated, so to speak, up to a new measure. He thought that if it was allowed to go on, it would be found to work more satisfactorily. It was well known to many honorable members that a Bill of almost similar effect had been in force in the colony of Victoria for nearly ten years; and, so far as he was aware, no outcry had ever yet been raised against it. The system of electors' rights had been going on in that colony during all those years, and he was at a loss to understand why it should not work equally well in this colony. They had been told on the previous evening by the honorable the Premier how impersonation had taken place under the present Act; but the question was, whether personation would be stopped by the Bill now proposed. It might do so in cases where two or three persons tried to vote under the one name, but it would not, where only one person tried it on. It was very likely also that the first election under the proposed Bill would be as great

a failure as the present Act was said to have been. There was no doubt that there were some faults in the existing Act; for instance, there was the fact of persons having to make a declaration before a magistrate. He knew that in his own district, where magistrates were few and far between, a great many persons qualified as electors in other respects had been unable to get their names on the roll; for that reason he considered that the declarations before magistrates might be abolished. There was one matter in connection with the Bill which he should like to call attention to, and for which provision should be made—and that was, the payment of returning officers. He could not see any reason why those gentlemen should not be paid, as there was a great deal of responsibility and labor attached to their office, for which they should receive some remuneration. He thought, on the whole, that the Bill was very likely to pass, with some few amendments, which could be made in committee; and he considered it was, on the whole, a very fair measure. In regard to the presiding officer's having to seal up ballot papers and to send them to the returning officer without opening or examining them, the honorable member for Warwick almost hinted that they had been tampered with.

Mr. Morgan: No; they might be.

Mr. Royds would not detain the House any longer, but would vote for the second reading.

Mr. Dickson said it was not his intention to give a silent vote on such an important question as an amendment in the present elections law, as he believed it was one of the most important matters that could possibly be brought under the attention of honorable members. Before proceeding to discuss the merits of the Bill, he must congratulate the Government upon the alacrity they had shown in introducing it at such an early stage of the session. There were several features in the Bill of which he approved, and there were some with which he could not agree. The chief feature which he had noticed in it was allowing the obnoxious electors' rights to expire; he believed that that was a step in the right direction, for, as the honorable the Premier had on the previous evening pointed out, those electors' rights had altogether failed in preventing personation, but, on the contrary, had encouraged it. There was, however, another light in which he wished to put the question; and that was, that whilst the facility for exercising the franchise was very great of itself, namely, that every male resident in the colony for a period of six months had a right to vote, he regretted to see that by the system of electors' rights the exercise of that franchise was encumbered with so many difficulties that numbers of persons were precluded from enjoying it. He believed that in a very short time, if the present system of elections was continued, the members of that House would become the representatives of minorities only, and that the bulk of the people would cease to take any interest in the proceedings of the Parliament. Those were merely allegations, it might be said; but to substantiate them he would lay before honorable members a few figures. He found that according to the Registrar-General's statistics the population, on the 31st December, 1872, was 133,000 persons, 24,000 of whom were registered electors of the colony. He had selected that period, as honorable members would recollect that the revision of the electoral rolls took place immediately afterwards in 1873, so he was not far wrong when he estimated the voting power at 26,000. He had also put down eighteen contested seats which occurred during the last election; and when he read the names of those seats to honorable members, they would perceive that he had not picked them out, but had taken the most populous as well as the most sparsely populated electorates. They were Brisbane, Enoggera, Bulimba, Logan, Ipswich, Bremer, Bundamba, Stanley, Toowoomba, Maranoa, Balonne, Maryborough, Gympie, Mulgrave, Rockhampton, Blackall, Ravenswood, and Burke. He thought that was a very fair average of the general elections throughout the colony. In those eighteen electorates the number of votes polled was 6,333; therefore, supposing the whole electorates in the colony were equally populated, the whole voting power of the colony used in returning 42 members would only have been 14,700 against the 24,000 registered electors. Now, that was a very significant fact, and showed the danger that might arise from hedging around the exercise of the franchise with unnecessary encumbrances. As honorable members were aware, several electors had declined to attend and put themselves to inconvenience in any way to exercise their rights under the present system. A great poet once said:—

> "Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

But the greatest decadence that could prevail in any nation would be the one that would be attended with the decadence of its social and moral progress—when the citizens of a state themselves evinced a disinclination in the exercise of their own political privileges, and the maintenance of the state's political institutions. It had been stated by Macaulay and other great political writers, that the worst feature of legislation was when it tended to isolate the people from a sympathy with their rulers; and he thought that when he stated to the House, that out of 26,000 electors, only 14,700 had voted at the last elections, they would see that there was some fault in the legislation of the colony that prevented so many from coming forward and exercising a voice in the government of the country. There were some faults in the Bill,

at least so they appeared to him, to which he would allude. He would first of all refer to the first four clauses, which stated that there should be no revision of the rolls during the present year. Now, he thought it would be granted by honorable members on both sides of the House that the present rolls were extremely unsatisfactory; they were compiled in a great hurry, and were very defective, many people being transposed from one place to another, perhaps to a place for which they had no qualification. He thought also that as the population of the colony had increased 16,000 since the last rolls were made up, every facility should be given for their revision. Unless, indeed, there was some very strong argument to the contrary, he should certainly move that that clause, clause number 3, be expunged. There was another feature in the Bill, to which the present was the proper time to refer; and he especially alluded to it, because the Bill appeared to be, in that respect, a transcript of the Act of 1872. He referred, now, to the 11th as well as the 63rd clauses; the 11th clause contained as a provision—

"That nothing herein contained shall prevent any returning officer being a police magistrate or clerk of petty sessions from giving a casting vote as hereinafter provided."

The 63rd clause referred to the number of votes being equal, and provided—

"And in the event of the number of votes being found to have been equal for any two or more candidates he shall by a casting vote decide which shall have been elected Provided that no returning officer shall vote at any election for the electoral district of which he is the returning officer except in the case of an equality of votes as aforesaid."

He thought it would be well, in framing measures of that kind, to amend a defect which had arisen under the present Act—namely, that a returning officer must be an elector of the district over which he presided. He would particularly call attention, when re-casting the Act, to the necessity of rendering the position of the returning officer free from any ambiguity as to the right of his giving a casting vote. He would next turn to clauses 52 and 53, which were, he believed, new, and which, he must say, he was not at the present time much in favor of. He was very happy to hear the arguments of the honorable the Premier upon them; but still, as he read them, he was opposed to them. The 52nd clause would be especially objectionable in large electorates, as he took it that, supposing a large number of persons were franchised, they must either put themselves to the inconvenience of travelling to a polling-place a long distance away, or else vote in some other place where they had no qualification. He certainly thought that, in large electorates, it would be fraught with inconvenience, and would, in fact, do away with the secrecy of the ballot. He took exception to it as it now stood, but would be happy to hear arguments to the contrary. He also took exception to the powers given to the presiding officer by the 53rd clause, as it appeared to him that there would be conferred upon that person powers which of right belonged to a revision court. He did not see why, in the heat of political excitement, a returning officer should have vested in him such large powers. There was also another clause to which, what he might call the "primary" objections he had raised, would apply, and that was the 60th clause, namely, that—

"Each presiding officer other than the returning officer shall immediately on the close of the poll in the presence of the poll-clerk (if any) and also of such of the candidates and scrutineers as may desire to attend count the number of all the ballot-papers which have been taken at the polling-place whereat he presided without opening or examining the same in any way and shall then in the like presence make up in one parcel all such ballot-papers together with all books kept by him during the polling and the roll supplied to or used by him at the election signed by him and the poll-clerk (if any) and also a written statement signed by himself and countersigned by the poll-clerk (if any) and any scrutineers who may be present and shall consent to sign the same containing the numbers in words as well as figures of the ballot-papers so counted as aforesaid and shall seal up such parcel and permit the same to be sealed by the scrutineers present if they so desire and shall thereafter with the least possible delay transmit such sealed parcel to the returning officer."

There had been a great many arguments used for and against that clause, but his opinion was against it, as a great many electors naturally had a desire to know the number polled for each candidate at their particular polling-place in order to form an opinion as to the probable result of the election. But there was another thing of far more importance, namely, that supposing at any future time a question was raised against the validity of an election, and it was stated that an irregularity had taken place, if all the papers were mixed together without the presiding officer having previously ascertained their contents, how was it to be known where the irregularity had taken place? That, however, was a matter which might be explained away when the Bill was in committee. He should support the second reading of the Bill, and would be very glad to see it go into committee that evening, and become law as soon as possible, as it was a measure which had been looked forward to by constituencies all over the colony. He hoped it would be speedily passed, as there was a very strong feeling indeed against the present system of voters' rights, and also because electors were at present in a state of uncertainty as to how they should qualify themselves until the Bill became law. He should support the Bill, reserving to himself the right to propose the

amendments he had mentioned when it was in committee.

Mr. THOMPSON said he fancied from what he had heard—he had not been present during the whole debate—that the Bill was to pass its second reading; he should not, therefore make a speech, but should merely call attention to the mode in which it proposed to alter the present law. Amongst other things, it proposed to abolish the voters' rights; but he contended that, so far as his experience of the last election went, that system worked admirably; that whereas one man voted six times under the old Act, at the last election there was not, that he was aware of, a single case of personation; if there were any, at any rate there were not so many. Now, under the Bill, it was proposed to introduce something in place of that, but he did not think the system had had a fair trial. He was met with the objection that the present Act gave the electors great trouble; but if the mere signing of a paper, the mere signing of a man's own name, was to be considered a trouble in recording his vote—in fact, doing his duty as a citizen—it struck him that the mere going to the poll would be too much trouble, and that the next thing would be that votes should be taken by letter; in fact, it had been proposed that that should be done. The line must be drawn somewhere, and he certainly thought that the present system should not be abolished with only the little trial that it had had. And what was proposed to be substituted for it? He saw, by referring to page 10 of the Bill, that it was intended that every man should vote in his own police district; at least, that would be the conclusion arrived at by every one reading that part of the Bill; but when he got to clause 52, he found that the Government of the day were to have it in their power to point out to each polling-place a district, but that a man could, under certain circumstances, vote out of his own district. Why, to place such a power in the hands of any Government would be most outrageous. He would read the clause, and leave honorable members to judge:—

"52. For the purposes of all elections it shall be lawful for the Governor in Council by notice in the *Gazette* to assign to each polling-place therein appointed for any electoral district a polling district embracing such portion of the said electoral district as the Governor in Council may appoint in that behalf and it shall be the duty of every returning officer to give public notice of all such polling districts in like manner as of polling-places and after such notification of any polling district or districts every elector shall vote at every such election as aforesaid at the polling-place so appointed for the polling district within which his qualification arises or is situated unless in the event of his offering to vote at a polling-place other than that appointed for the polling district within which his qualification arises or is situated he shall comply with the requirements of the next following section."

Now, it appeared to him that the intention of the draughtsman of the Bill was, that every man should vote in his own police district; and therefore he drew up the schedule on page 10 to show how that should be done; yet, although that schedule was left in the Bill, he had afterwards drawn out clauses 52 and 53, giving the Government the power to say in what districts there should be polling-places. There was no doubt that the present Government might carry out that power fairly, he presumed all Colonial Secretaries would do so; but still, when they were not in office, they might see great objections to it. Now, the next objection was that, whilst in the late Bill, the framers did away with the old clause in the Act of 1860, by which the rolls were collected by the police, they were now asked to revert to it again. The reason for abolishing it was, that it was found that constables frequently stuffed the rolls with any names they thought fit, and yet it was proposed to go back to such a system. Because it was too much trouble to a person to sign his name and register his claim to vote, they were to appoint a lot of ignorant constables to make out and stuff the electoral rolls. Having abolished that part of the Act of 1860, he did not see that the morality of the colony had so much increased in 1874, that it should be found advisable to revert to a system which did not work well when the population was very small indeed compared with what it now was. It would be going back to a system by which persons were returned to the House by the force of those who had no right whatever to vote. They would have resurrection votes, and the names of men would reappear who were supposed to be on the other side of the world. They knew of all those things as a matter of notoriety, and yet they were asked to go back to a system under which such things could be done, and why? simply to save trouble to persons who were too indolent to sign their names. He had been told by one gentleman that on claiming to have one's name inserted on the roll it was not necessary to make a solemn declaration, but he perceived by the proposed Bill that it was necessary. Then, again, he saw no provision for excising the names of dead men; he would very much like to see that put in. There were many details which would have to be looked to when the Bill was in committee—for instance, those about closing the poll; he thought there should be some outward act to show when it was closed, such as closing the door or turning the key—something that would be a demonstration that the poll was closed. In more than one election, objections had been made as to when the poll was really closed. There were also other matters of detail in the Bill which would require attention. The abolition of the voters' rights and the revisions of the rolls were really the only new principles in the Bill. He should give it his support, but at the same

time would strongly endeavor to carry out his views on some particular points. There was another observation he had to make before sitting down, and that was, that he should be very glad to see introduced into the Bill the last English improvement in the law of elections—which was, that all cases of disputed elections should not be tried, as at present, by a parliamentary committee, but by a judge of the Supreme Court.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. MACROSSAN thought there could be very little doubt about the desirability of passing the Bill now before them, not only on account of the many objections which were raised to the present Act, but from a desire shown on the part of electors not to enrol their names until a new measure became the law of the land. The honorable member for the Bremer had stated that he believed the system of voters' rights had worked admirably, and was, in fact, a complete success. It certainly might have worked admirably in some respects, but not for the purpose of enabling persons to register themselves and to vote for the return of members to that House. He had a perfect knowledge of how it had worked in his own district, and in that represented by the honorable Attorney-General, and he could safely say that fully three-quarters of the people had been disfranchised by it. He thought that when they were living under representative Government their endeavors should be to have as many people on the roll as possible; as the greater number they represented the greater was the representation of the people in that House. He held that every citizen in the country, be he rich or poor, had a right to be on the roll; and that no person, whether rich or poor, should have any obstruction put in the way of getting his name on the roll. He believed that in the opinion of some persons, the ability to vote for the election of a representative was considered a privilege, but that was a principle he could not agree to. He looked upon the right of every citizen to vote, as a right conferred upon him by a much higher power than any legislature; and that, therefore, no obstruction should be offered to any man putting his name on the roll, even if such obstruction was under the disguise of a precaution against personation. He believed that those honorable members who passed the Act of 1872, thought that it would have that effect, and were of opinion that a similar system had worked well in the colony of Victoria; but if those honorable members had read the Victorian newspapers, they would have seen that it had not worked well there, and that even at the very time the measure was passed into law in this colony, there was an outcry being raised against it in Victoria. He believed at the time, that the members who voted for it here, were looked upon in that colony as sheep tied to a post, so dissatisfied had the people there become with their Act. He would show how the system of electors' rights had worked in the North, in the districts with which he was familiar. He recollected that on the previous evening, surprise had been expressed by several honorable members that any magistrates had refused to take the declarations of electors, unless they were paid for so doing; but he believed that, although it was unquestionably very bad taste on their part, there was no law compelling them to take a declaration unless they were paid for it. Now, in the mining portion of the Kennedy district, the miners had actually to pay a magistrate to meet them on Saturday afternoons to take their declarations, in company with an honest magistrate, who was a working miner, and who refused to accept any payment. Even then that was only to take the declarations of miners in the immediate neighborhood of Charters Towers and Millchester, and he would ask, what became of the others who could not attend unless they walked in on Friday and remained on Saturday? If they did not do that, they had no opportunity of making a declaration. Then, after making the declaration, they had to walk the same distance to take out their voters' rights, and then to go the same distance to record their votes. If that was a system which the honorable member for the Bremer thought worked well for the colony, the honorable member made a very great mistake. There were some parts of the proposed Bill with which he could not agree. He objected, for instance, to the great powers which would be given by it to the Government of the day in nominating polling-places. He was not inclined to trust any Government in regard to elections; and as the honorable member for Enoggera had stated, he objected to the Bill because it did not specify that no returning officer should be a Government officer. He considered it was a most objectionable thing that a returning officer might be a Government officer, who could be suspended at any time if he did not do what he was told by the Government. In the electorates of Kennedy and Ravenswood that power had been very much abused, as there was not a single officer at the last general election from the returning officer to the bailiff who did not exercise his influence against the return of the present honorable Attorney-General. In the electorate which he represented, the returning officer who was stationed at Townsville actually issued electors' rights there long before he sent them up to Ravenswood; and why, he would ask, was that done? except that it was supposed that the Townsville people were in favor of the late Premier. Yet, in spite of that, the miners in ten days took out sufficient voters' rights to counteract all the official influences brought to bear against them. As far as personation went, he thought honorable members would admit that since the Act of 1872 was passed, personation could not have been more than

one per cent., and he would ask whether it was right that the remaining 99 per cent. should be insulted merely for the sake of that one per cent? There was, in his opinion, no means of preventing personation, except by increasing very largely the number of scrutineers, as by them alone could it be prevented. He was opposed to several clauses of the Bill which he hoped to see modified in committee. He thought the clause relating to open voting was most objectionable, inasmuch as it was a violation of the principle of the ballot, and he believed that no good could be had by allowing any violation of that principle. Then the clause providing for the sealing up of the voting papers was also open to objection. Perhaps the honorable the Premier had not considered the distance which these papers would have to be carried in some of the country districts; and leaving aside all corrupt and undue influence, and taking into account only the accidents by flood and other causes which usually accompanied travelling in the bush, it was quite possible that these voting papers might be lost; and then, he would ask the honorable the Premier, what would be the result of such an election? However, taking the Bill as a whole, he must congratulate the honorable gentleman upon it, as being a great deal in advance of the Elections Act of 1872, and he would read for the information of the House an extract from the principal newspaper in the North, so far as circulation was concerned, on the present Act. Speaking of the Bill now before the House, it said:—

"By this Bill it is proposed to abolish all declarations and electors' rights, and to afford every facility in the way of being placed on the electoral roll. This is good news for us here, aware as we are, from practical experience, of how many have been disfranchised through these objectionable obstructions. By the Elections Act of 1872, every possible impediment was thrown in the way of exercising the franchise instead of affording every facility for doing so."

Now, he had no hesitation in saying that the Elections Act of 1872, so far as affording the exercise of the franchise, was a perfect sham, by reason of the obstructions it placed in the way of men getting their names on the rolls, and obtaining voters' rights. In fact, it took away with one hand what it gave with the other under the manhood suffrage clause; and he must congratulate the honorable the Premier for attempting earnestly to fulfil that which was foreshadowed by what was called the Ipswich manifesto, the principles of which he believed had roused the ire of a great many gentlemen in that House. He hoped that honorable gentleman would go on and succeed, as he showed an earnest desire of doing, not only with this Bill, but also with the other important measures before the House. He would give the Bill general support, but he would try to alter the objectionable clauses he had mentioned, in committee.

Mr. J. Scott said he did not rise with a view of opposing the Bill, but he wished to call attention to one or two points in it to which the honorable the Premier referred in the course of his speech. The first question to which the honorable member invited attention was that relating to voters' rights; and in support of doing away with those rights, he read certain figures, a few of which he (Mr. Scott) took down at the time he spoke. He said, on the South Brisbane roll there were 1,124 names, while only 472 voters' rights had been issued; and at Oxley, where there were 573 names on the roll, only 232 rights had been issued. Now, if these figures proved anything at all, he submitted they proved either that a large number of people did not care anything at all about this right, or that these men did not exist, and their names were on the roll under a false pretext altogether. If the honorable member had gone one step further, and given the numbers of voters at the last general election, for the several electorates, he would have enabled the House to judge how many personated on that occasion; because he held that legitimate voters, almost to a man, in electorates such as South Brisbane and Fortitude Valley, where the opportunity of obtaining their rights was almost at their very doors, would have taken out their rights, and the men whose names were on the roll who did not take out these rights were not voters, but men who had no right to be on the roll. He therefore maintained that the difference between the number of voters' rights issued and the number of persons who voted at the last election would show the amount of personation that had taken place. He thought these figures went to show the benefit of the system at present in existence. He would now say a few words with regard to the 52nd clause, which proposed to cut up the electoral districts into polling districts, in any of which an elector could vote. Now, in towns where the boundaries of these districts could be clearly shown for the information and guidance of electors, this system might work pretty fairly, but in the country, where it was very difficult, indeed, to define lines or to get information as to the boundaries of particular districts, this clause would have the effect of disfranchising one-half the electors in some electorates. It was quite impossible to describe districts in the country, so that people could be able to know in what district they should vote—nine-tenths of them would not hear of it at all, and the remaining tenth would not know in what district they resided, because these lines could only be imaginary lines; they could not be defined lines. Large numbers of electors would be disfranchised by this, and where electors had to vote openly, it was an abuse of the ballot upon which so much stress had been laid. In connection with clause 60, there were two or three difficulties

which he did not see how to get over. In the first place there was the difficulty which had already been pointed out with regard to travelling in the bush and the danger of the papers being lost. Under the present system copies were kept which might be produced as evidence at any time; but under this clause, if the papers connected with an election in a large district where there were, perhaps, ten or twenty polling places, were lost, it would invalidate the election, or it would have to be gone over again in a particular polling district, and then much greater influence could be brought to bear on electors than at the general election, and a great many more votes might be polled than were previously recorded. But, even putting that on one side, he held that the difficulties in the working of the system would be such as to render it entirely inoperative. Honorable members on looking at the next clause would see it provided:—

"Every returning officer shall at the close of the poll in the presence of his poll clerk (if any) and of such candidates and scrutineers as may attend examine and count the number of votes for each candidate at his own polling place and shall make a written statement signed by himself and countersigned by his poll clerk (if any) and by any scrutineers who may be present and shall consent to sign the same containing the numbers in words and figures of the votes received by each candidate at such polling place."

Now, in all these districts where there was a presiding officer, there would also be scrutineers, if required, and persons would be able to ascertain at any presiding officer's district the exact number of men who had voted, and also their names. It was all very well to say that these names were not published at the moment, but that they were sent to the returning officer; but he would point out that all a candidate had to do was, if he could not attend personally, to have a scrutineer, who would be present when the papers were opened. If honorable members would turn to clause 62, they would see how the system would operate. It said:—

"As soon as possible after the returning officer shall have received from the several presiding officers the sealed parcels transmitted to him as aforesaid containing the ballot papers taken at the polling-places at which such presiding officers respectively presided he shall in the presence of his poll clerk (if any) and of such candidates and scrutineers as may attend open such sealed parcels and examine and count the number of votes for each candidate at each polling-place and after having counted the same shall make up in separate parcels the ballot papers rolls books and papers received from each presiding officer."

The scrutineer would have the roll before him, and could ascertain every possible information as to the votes polled in each district, and the matter would be no longer a secret. It was impossible to keep the votes polled in each district secret, and it was also impossible to keep the votes recorded for each candidate secret. Then, again, in the town electorates, candidates would be able to ascertain, within a reasonable time, whether they were elected or not; but in the country districts, they would not be able to know for weeks, or perhaps months. The thing was of no practical utility; and it was only putting obstacles in the way of candidates knowing whether they were returned or not. As to the statement that many persons were waiting to see if this Bill were passed, he thought that was a strong argument in favor of allowing things to remain as they were. It showed the evil of constantly changing the law on this question. They had an Elections Act passed in 1872; they were to have another in 1874, and probably another in 1875 or 1876; and it appeared that, once they began to make changes, there was no end to it. People had now an opportunity of having their names placed on the rolls if they chose, and no change could invalidate that. There was, therefore, nothing at all in that objection.

Mr. BUZACOTT believed no honorable member of that House was more anxious than himself that the franchise should be extended to the utmost, and that no unnecessary obstacles should be placed in the way of its exercise. At the same time, however, he could not support the proposal made in this Bill that the collection of the rolls should be placed in the hands of the police. He believed that, if they adopted this, they would again have the police becoming political agents, as they were when the system was in force in Queensland before. He had observed the collection of the rolls by the police, and he could state that they had been made political agents, and that the rolls collected under their manipulation had been the most corrupt they had ever had. He thought, therefore, the House would do well to hesitate before it authorised any such system. He thought it was not at all necessary, and that they could easily make provision so that any man who was really desirous of obtaining and exercising the franchise could do so. He felt very strongly on this point, because he knew that the police had on former occasions been active political agents, and he thought this must present itself as a serious obstacle to any honorable member who had experience in these matters, in supporting the Bill now before the House. There had been a great deal said about the difficulty men had in getting their names on the roll, in getting their voters' rights, and in recording their votes; and, in fact, all sorts of imaginary obstacles had been raised. He was quite prepared to admit that in certain districts there had been unnecessary obstacles placed in the way of those who were desirous of exercising the franchise; but these cases had been the exception and not the rule, so far as his experience and observation had extended. He had never seen any instance in which a man who was anxious to exercise the

franchise was not able to do so; or any difficulties placed in the way which a man who was possessed of ordinary intelligence would not be able to overcome. It was, of course, of the greatest importance that every man should be placed in a position to record his vote; but he thought it was very undesirable that policemen should be sent about to men's houses to collect their names for the roll. They heard a great deal of horror expressed when the education question was under discussion, about a policeman entering a man's house, and he thought the same arguments applied in this case. He was of opinion that a very simple system could be devised by which a man could register his name whenever he was desirous of doing so. A man should be able to go into the Police Court on any day, and make application to have his name placed on the roll, and if the court should be sitting at the time, and saw no obstacle in the way, his name should be received by the magistrate and registered there and then. He thought it was quite unnecessary to put the country to the great expense of collecting the rolls, because, although he observed it was provided that the police should not receive any remuneration for this work, he was quite certain that if they had to do it, it would necessitate additional expense in order to increase the staff. The system would therefore be not only undesirable in itself, but also expensive. With regard to the obstacles which the existing law placed in the way of the exercise of the franchise, he could say, so far as Rockhampton was concerned, that a larger number of persons voted last November than on any previous occasion, so far as he was aware; and whatever the obstructions or restrictions which existed under the present Act might be, he could say that they did not operate in Rockhampton, and other towns, so severely as some honorable members had asserted. At the same time, he was quite free to admit that in the outlying districts the Act had operated to a very considerable extent in preventing electors from recording their votes; and so far as the portion of the Bill which provided for the abolition of voters' rights was concerned, he would support it. On the whole, he thought they involved a great deal of trouble and expense; that there was nothing to be gained by them, inasmuch as they were an unnecessary part of the system, and that they could do very well without them. With regard to the 53rd clause, he thought the power proposed to be placed in the hands of returning officers was extremely undesirable, and if the Bill went into committee, he should oppose that clause strongly. He should also oppose the 60th clause, because he thought it was very undesirable that once an election was over the portion of the community interested in it should be kept unnecessarily in suspense as to the result. He did not see any object that was to be gained by the sealing up of the ballot papers by the presiding officer, and he thought the provision was quite unnecessary. With reference to the disfranchisement which was alleged to have occurred in some electoral districts, under the present Act, he might mention that he had received information that a number of electors in the electorate of Ravenswood were also placed on the electoral roll of the Kennedy, and though they only held the one qualification, they voted in both electorates; and he believed that the honorable member who represented that constituency polled a larger majority in consequence of that than he would have done otherwise. He did not mean to say that the number was sufficient to upset the election, but it increased the majority very considerably. There was another matter to which he would briefly allude. It had been said in the course of the debate that electors could not get their declarations taken unless the magistrate received some compensation; and he would very much like to see the name of the magistrate brought forward, and he ought certainly to be dismissed.

Mr. STEWART said, after the long speeches that had been made *pro* and *con.* this Bill, he would not occupy the time of the House more than a few minutes. He would not like the second reading to pass without recording his opinion as to the desirability of some such measure as the one proposed being passed. He thought, so far as the present Act was concerned, voters' rights had been a perfect failure, and that the worst had not been seen of the system. He believed that if it continued in force for another year or two, the amount of personation that would take place would be something dreadful. In every instance where a man had left the colony, or gone from his particular district, perhaps leaving his voters' right behind him, some one would be found —and there were many persons who were ignorant of the real object and purpose of these rights—to vote under that right, although he was not the party named in it. He thought, therefore, that if there was nothing else in the Bill but the abolition of this system, it would be worthy of support. He considered the features of the Bill which the honorable member for the Bremer condemned were a strong recommendation to honorable members to support it. He believed the collection of the names of electors had become a necessity; it might have been in force some time ago and been abandoned for what was considered a better system, but he thought the system adopted since had been found wanting. There could be no doubt that only a small proportion of those who were entitled to vote did so even at contested elections, and he thought it was absolutely necessary to adopt some system such as that shadowed forth in this Bill. He considered it was the duty of the State to get an expression of opinion from all the electors in the colony who were entitled to vote. The division of the electorates had been con-

demned, but he thought that would be found to be a good feature, and although he did not quite agree with it as it now stood in the Bill, he believed a very slight alteration would meet the objections of honorable members, and that was, that the elector himself should have power to say in which district he should vote. If he had that power, no doubt he would elect to vote at the place nearest his residence; and he thought a provision of this kind would meet all the objections raised against this portion of the Bill. With regard to polling places, he was of opinion that they should be fixed by the House, because he did not think any Ministry should have the power of appointing polling places in different electorates. He had several amendments to move in committee if they were not moved by other honorable members, and he should try to get some such clause as this inserted. He would support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. BAILEY said he would support the second reading of the Bill, and he would not occupy the time of the House by commenting on the various clauses of it. It was carrying into effect the principle which had long been the intention of the Legislature, namely, that they should adopt a system of manhood suffrage. There was no doubt that, sooner or later, they must have manhood suffrage, and he thought that by this Bill they would get as close to that system as possible. At the same time, he must remark that, while they were legislating for the benefit of the total population of this colony, they should not neglect the interests of a large and important section of the community—namely, the interests connected with landed property. They would shortly find that, unless some provision were made to protect these interests which ought to be the first to be regarded, they would soon die out from not being represented in that House. He warned the House that, if this measure were passed, it would be necessary, very shortly, to give those interests in the colony a certain amount of representation; and, if they could not be fully represented in that House, they must be represented in the higher branch of the the Legislature.

Mr. PETTIGREW would only make a few observations; and, in the first place, he would correct the honorable member who had just sat down. If he turned to the 7th clause of the Bill, relating to the qualifications of electors, he would find that property would be represented, as well as having manhood suffrage. Now, a considerable amount of discussion had taken place, and a great deal of odium had been cast upon the police, in order to show that they would not be competent to collect the electoral rolls; but he certainly considered that, if they were competent to distribute the voters' rights, they were equally competent to take down the names of electors. He might state, also, that, if ever they intended to get proper rolls, it could only be done by the police or some other properly qualified persons going round the country and collecting the names. He considered that a greater nuisance never existed then the necessity for making declarations under the present Act before a man could be entitled to vote. He could say that in his own district several persons had been disqualified because they had not an opportunity of getting these declarations witnessed before a magistrate; and he might also say, in reply to the observations made by the honorable the Premier, and the honorable member for Enoggera, that he was afraid a number of electors whose names appeared on the various rolls throughout the colony had no existence whatever during the last election, except on the paper. He was pretty nearly certain that in the elections for Ipswich and the Bremer the vote of almost every man who could be got hold of was polled, although he had no right; and in the electorate of Stanley, which he had the honor to represent, although there were 390 on the roll, he felt certain that 300 were all the men who could be got under any circumstances. He did not know how many voted, but he believed the number was 280, or something like that. He looked upon electors' rights as a great improvement upon the old system, and he felt almost certain that he occupied his position in that House through the existence of those rights. It appeared to him that the principal point in that system, which some honorable members had taken umbrage at, was retained in the present Bill. Now, there could be no doubt that what had been done before would be done again. What was there to prevent persons who were anxious to support a particular candidate, and whose consciences were a little easy on the point, getting on their horses, and riding from one polling district to another? Take, for instance, the electorate of Stanley;—they could vote at Laidley at nine o'clock, go on to Gatton, vote there; then to Helidon, and vote there; and then, again, at Murphy's Creek—four times in the one electorate; and supposing there were ten of them, that would be forty votes at once. The records of the House would show that personation had been carried on in the past to an enormous extent, and he should certainly object to dispensing with voters' rights. He thought they were an improvement on the old system; he had said so always, and he was still of the same opinion. He thought there had been a very fair expression of opinion by the country during the last election. He did not say it was so in all cases, and he must admit that he had been rather staggered by the statements of the honorable member for Kennedy; but he believed that the same things had not occurred elsewhere. He thoroughly agreed with the 12th clause—that the rolls should be collected, because he believed that it would be a very great improvement. Then, under the disqualification portion of clause 10, he observed that

any person in the receipt of any charitable allowance, or the inmate of any charitable institution, should be disqualified from voting, and he might state, he believed that at the last election they actually brought persons out of the Ipswich Hospital to vote against him. He also thought the 34th clause, which provided for the appointment of polling places; and that no polling place should be appointed less than four days before the election, was a great improvement. Now, he believed the honorable member for Carnarvon had stated that polling places had been appointed where there were only two electors to vote; but he was aware that the late Government actually put a polling place where there were no electors to vote. Then, with regard to the clauses providing for the declaration of results, he quite agreed with the honorable member for Springsure, and some other honorable members, who had spoken on the subject. By this provision the election of a person who happened to be obnoxious to the party then in power, might be delayed until the very last moment, and when the election did take place, there would be great delay in ascertaining who was elected. Take, as an instance, the election for Stanley;—it was fourteen days before he knew the result, and that was within a reasonable distance, and what would the delay be where the distance was much greater? He believed it would tell against all honorable members. They did not know the day they would be carried on the shoulders of the people, and perhaps the next time they might be down at zero. He therefore thought they ought to adopt some system by which they would have an opportunity of knowing when the poll closed, how it stood. The general result of his experience had been that the working classes did not care whether it was known for whom they voted or not; and he did not believe that any influence was brought to bear upon them by employers, beyond what was fair and reasonable, and that any feeling which might arise during the election, died out as soon as it was over. But with regard to the bribery clauses, he would point out that there was one which had not been taken notice of, and it related to a practice that was very much resorted to. A candidate could appoint a man as his agent, and pay all his expenses, and there was nothing to prevent these agents being multiplied until every elector on the roll, or every doubtful voter, was placed in that position. He knew that this had been done; that agents had been appointed to a very great extent. On the whole, he thought the Bill would be an improvement on the present Act, which was also an improvement on the former one; and if they went on improving legislation in this manner, the time would, no doubt, come when they would arrive at perfection. He would suggest some alterations in committee, and from the feeling of the House, he believed he would be able to get some of them passed.

Mr. De Satge considered this question was settled many years ago, when the subject of manhood suffrage was before the country, and now the question seemed to be whether they should have perfect freedom in the exercise of the franchise with due precautions against personation. He believed the evil of personation was a very small one compared with the injurious effects which resulted from placing undue restrictions upon the exercise of the principle they had established throughout the country. He thought once they had determined to give every resident who had been six months in the colony a vote, the sooner they abolished all restrictions upon the carrying out of that principle the better. At the same time he was of opinion that, if possible, they ought to make the offence of personation a felony, instead of a misdemeanor, because by that means they might succeed, to a great extent, in preventing it. If it were possible to introduce a provision to that effect, he thought they would then have met every part of the question. He had listened with some astonishment to the observations of the honorable member for the Kennedy, with regard to certain malpractices in certain electorates. There could be no doubt that the general body of returning officers chosen by the Government, throughout the colony, were well chosen. All the gentlemen he had known as returning officers were officers of the Government in whose honor they could place full confidence; and he did not see how they could depart from the practice of making police magistrates returning officers, in the country districts, when no one else would undertake the duty. The great object of the Bill was to give manhood suffrage to all persons who had resided for a certain time in the colony, but the representatives of mining constituencies should recollect, if they had a small number of electors on the rolls, that the population in those districts was of a very migratory character. They could not expect to find the same number on the rolls as in more settled districts, because diggers were nearly always moving about from one gold field to another. He thought that, if the Act of 1872 had not succeeded as well as was expected, they must trace it, not so much to the fault of the measure as to the want of political education in the country. However they might value the importance of representation, it was not shared by the people of the colony in the country parts, and there would always be a difficulty in getting them to register. They might raise the cry of "Register," but there was an apathy on political matters amongst the people which he believed was a sign of prosperity. As soon as a man believed he was well treated, and was well off, he did not care to exercise his rights to the extent he would if he were trodden upon or oppressed in any way. That, he believed, had in a great measure been the reason why the Act of 1872 had not been found to work as well as it should do.

He considered the system of voters' rights was bad from the beginning. It was surrounded by too many restrictions—restrictions and difficulties which the promoters of the Bill never dreamt of. They had given it a trial, not a very long one, and it was now proposed to abolish it. He did not expect any great results from the Bill now before the House. The first great principle had been established on a former measure, and there was no fresh principle in this Bill, to some of the clauses of which he should make objections in committee. The most important was the sealing up of the voting papers, as it appeared there was no provision made for the robbery or loss of these papers in transit, which might occur at any time in the country districts. He would not occupy the time of the House by making any further observations on the question.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the debate on the question had been so one-sided, that it was unnecessary for the supporters of the Bill to speak at any great length respecting it. He rose simply for the purpose of setting the honorable member for Enoggera and some other honorable members right with regard to one of the features of the Bill. One objection raised was to the 4th clause, which provided that there should be no revision court held under the Act of 1872 for the present year; but he would point out that under that Act the revised roll would not come into force until the 1st of November of this year, and the existing roll would be the roll for all purposes until that date; and, even supposing the Bill to be carried, the roll which would be made up under it would not come into force until the 1st of January next, so that there would be only two months gained by the country going to the expense by making up the roll under the Act of 1872. He thought the leading principles of the Bill were, the abolition of voters' rights, and the collection of the names of electors by the police; and these two main principles had already received the assent of a large majority of the House. He thought that every member of the Assembly who was present when the Act of 1872 was passed, must share the responsibilities of the adoption of the system of voters' rights. There were certain features connected with the system which led some honorable members to approve of them; but, before it had been in operation many months, honorable members saw how objectionable they were, and how desirable it was that they should be abolished. The honorable member for Oxley brought in a Bill at the end of the last session to suspend the operation of the system of voters' rights, or to abolish it altogether, but unfortunately he was unsuccessful. He thought if this Bill did nothing else but abolish these rights—if there were only one clause in it for that purpose—it ought to pass. He looked upon the collection of the rolls by the police as a good provision, and it would not incur any great expense, because the police were already employed in similar duties, such as the collection of the jury lists and agricultural statistics, so that it would be very easy at the same time to collect the names of those who were eligible to be placed on the roll. Then, even if the police were actuated by improper motives, they could not place a man in a worse position than he was at present, because there would be sufficient time for him to send in his name. Whether the clause with regard to polling districts was exactly in the best shape it could be he was not prepared to say, but he thought the only effectual way of preventing personation was by some such system as this. He agreed with the honorable member for Kennedy that the only way to prevent personation was by the officials having personal knowledge of the voters themselves; and by adopting the system of compelling electors to their own district, where they were known to the returning officer or the scrutineers, was, he thought, a good means of preventing it. He believed, with the honorable member for North Brisbane, that in the course of two years they would have a larger amount of personation under the present Act than they ever had before. He believed the honorable member for Toowoomba, when this question was before the House on a former occasion, read an extract from a speech delivered in Victoria by one of the Ministers there—the matter was agitated there about the same time as the Elections Act of 1872 was passing through—in which it was stated that one person had over one hundred rights in his possession, which he was in the habit of using at the different elections. He could quite understand that this could be done without much difficulty, because the voters' right disarmed suspicion; and, in nine cases out of ten, a person holding a voters' right would pass unquestioned. Then there had been something said about deputy returning officers sealing up and forwarding voting papers, and an objection raised against this was, that the papers might be lost, but it seemed to him they had only to choose between two evils, and this appeared to be the least. There was no doubt that difficulty might arise, but he believed since responsible government had been established no such case had arisen. He quite agreed with honorable members, that the Government should have as little as possible to do with the conduct of elections, and they need not go far to find instances where Governments had grossly abused their power in this respect. He was aware of an instance where a polling-place was appointed at Lytton, and when he saw the announcement in the *Gazette*, he could hardly believe his eyes. Lytton was a dismal swampy place on the Brisbane River, and he believed there were not more than two residents—certainly not more than two electors there; and why it should be appointed a polling-place, while at the same time Brisbane, where 150 votes were polled, was refused to be appointed as such, he could not understand; but he afterwards

heard that it was intended to bring the warders from St. Helena to vote at Lytton. However, this was exposed, and the warders were actually brought several miles further up the river, to Doughboy, where they were marched up in military order to vote; and had it not been that three electors were sent down to vote at Lytton, there would not have been a single vote recorded there. With regard to the open voting in connection with clause 53, there was no doubt it was open to very serious objection; but the question of sub-districts was a difficult one to deal with. He had no doubt, however, that the discussion on these clauses would enable them to see their way to get rid of some of the difficulties which existed in connection with them. He would only refer to one more matter, and that was the argument of the honorable member for the Bremer—that if a man would not take the trouble to send in his application, he did not deserve to be on the roll, or to exercise the privilege of the franchise. He did not take that view. It was a matter in which every man was concerned; and, in the interests of the country, every qualified person should be placed in a position to record his vote. In fact, the whole country was injured if a man, through negligence, or circumstances over which he had no control, was not on the roll, and in a position to record his vote when the proper time came for him to do so.

Mr. FRYAR said it had been stated by the honorable the Premier that this was a question upon which every honorable member should speak, and it seemed that the House was of the same opinion. He must acknowledge, as a member who, during his candidature, spoke rather freely on this subject, he was anxious to make some remarks upon it; but when he found honorable members rising one after another, and expressing opinions diametrically opposed to his views, he felt a considerable amount of trepidation in addressing the House. But after what had been said by the honorable member for Stanley, he felt better able to say a few words upon it. The principal points this Bill proposed to deal with, were the collection of electoral rolls, and the question of voters' rights, and he believed the collection of the rolls was a step in the right direction. He was well aware that it had been a matter of great difficulty, not only in his own electorate, but in several others, to get names inserted on the rolls; but while this proposal to collect the names was a step in the right direction, he thought it only half met the case, because it was quite immaterial what care they took in compiling and completing these rolls, if they were to be subjected to such a complete expurgation as took place at some of the revision courts which were held in June last. During the last session of the late Parliament some rather uncomplimentary remarks were made with respect to the removal of police magistrates, who presided in most cases at the revision courts, and had considerable influence in dealing with the electoral rolls, from one place to another, but it appeared to him that these otherwise unnecessary removals were rendered necessary by the passing of the Electoral Districts Act, in consequence of which, the electoral rolls had to be rearranged. As an illustration of how this was accomplished he need only call attention to the electorate of Springsure, to which reference had already been made. In this electorate there were 1,100 adult males, but there were only 119 electors on the roll; and he might also mention the Kennedy electorate, where there were 1,070 adult males, there were 1,129 on the roll, which was quite the reverse to Springsure. But he need not go so far abroad to find a case to illustrate the point, because he could find one nearer home. He referred to the electorate of Bundamba, which was formerly comprised in the electorate of West Moreton. It took in all the parish of Moggill, which was in West Moreton, and part of it which was in East Moreton, but a large portion of the electors on the West Moreton list, residing at Moggill, had been thrown out altogether. He himself had been on the West Moreton list for many years, and although there could be no doubt about the qualification or the electorate in which it was now situated, his name had been expunged. Another gentleman who had resided at Moggill for several years, and was also on the West Moreton roll, had also had his name struck off in the same way. In fact, a large number of electors residing in Moggill were struck off the roll, in Ipswich, in June last. Perhaps this was thought necessary, as Bundamba was considered a sort of debatable territory between Ipswich and Brisbane influence. When the election came on, it was found that there was a Brisbane candidate in the field, and the six electors at Moggill voted for him, and no doubt the thirty or forty others who ought to have been able to vote, would have done the same. The object of the revision court had therefore been well and carefully carried out, although, perhaps, it was not so successful in the results as it was expected to be. With regard to the declaration required under the present Act to be made before a magistrate, it had been repeatedly stated that magistrates had been appointed for party political purposes. This was pointed out by the *Wide Bay and Burnett News* some two years ago; and again, during the election in November last, it was pointed out by the *Queensland Times*. It was asserted that a certain gentleman who had been appointed a magistrate by the late Government had broken faith with them, and betrayed the confidence reposed in him by canvassing and voting for an opposition candidate. He might say, with regard to the electorate he had the honor to represent, that it was a standing remark that magistrates were ap-

pointed not in proportion to the necessity which existed for them in certain places where their services were required by Europeans, but in proportion to the number of Polynesians they employed. He believed that, taking the whole of the agricultural districts of Bald Hills, South Pine, Kedron Brook, and Eagle Farm, constituting nearly the whole of the electorate of East Moreton, they would only find one magistrate; and the reason assigned was that he was the only man who had Polynesians. No doubt honorable members on the Ministerial benches would be able to state whether this was a fact. He believed it was a fact that this gentleman was the only magistrate in the district. They had another some time ago at Redcliffe, a gentleman against whom he never heard a word either socially, intellectually, or in any other way; but for some inscrutable reason, immediately after the passing of the Act of 1872, his name was expunged from the Commission of the Peace. He might also say that only about one-fourth of the adult males in the electorate he represented had been able to get their names on the roll; at any rate, only about one-fourth of them were on the roll. Taking the adult male basis, which he did not believe in, although it had been established, the electorate he represented was the most important in the whole of the thirty electorates into which the southern portion of the colony was divided. The electoral roll contained the names of 639 electors, about 150 of which were residents of Brisbane, and there was the usual proportion of duplicates and dead and absent men; so that he believed he was correct in stating that there were not more than one in four of the adult males in the district on the roll. He must congratulate the honorable the Premier on having appointed a very proper person as magistrate on the Maroochie River, and another at Mooloolah; and he thought that wherever there were a hundred individuals residing in isolated localities this matter should be attended to, so long as the present electoral law was in force. He was glad to see that the honorable the Premier proposed to arrange for the collection of the rolls, and he felt bound to state that, in his estimation, that was not only the best provision in the Bill, but it was the only one with which he could quite agree. With regard to voters' rights, he had fully expressed his views on that question to his constituents, and, although he held about a dozen meetings, not a single objection was raised to the opinion he held, which was that the system of voters' rights was the best provision that had ever been introduced for the prevention of personation. It had often happened to him that the best way to find out the faults of a system was to put an extreme case; and he would do so in this instance. It was presumed that every man on the roll was entitled to take out a voters' right, or for every name on the roll a right could be taken out; and under this system, if every man took out his right, or some one else took it out for him, the most that could be done was to record as many votes as there were names on the roll; but in the absence of these rights, and presuming that personation was carried on to its full extent —and it was well known that some candidates were disposed to resort to that practice —not only would every name on the roll be polled, but every name would be polled at every polling place. There was, therefore, a very great difference between having voters' rights and not having them. A short time ago a petition was presented in New South Wales for some provision of this kind, and it was shown that an election had taken place there at which 260 or 270 had voted twice; that about 37 had voted three times; and that about fourteen names had been voted for at four different places. In connection with this subject he would lay great stress on the opinions given by the Ipswich and West Moreton members. He believed that in those electorates the art of electioneering had been reduced almost to the certainty of an exact science. He was not aware, but according to common report, there was no other district in the colony where the art and practice of electioneering was so well studied, and so clearly known, so that he should set great value on the opinions of the representatives of those constituencies. He might mention that during the last election he was present at the principal polling place in one of the local electorates, and hearing an elector expressing regret that he was not able to vote more than once, he asked him how often he could vote if electors' rights were not in force, and he enumerated six polling-places, and said he could be back to the first before the poll was closed. He had no doubt he would be able to perform the feat. He thought, therefore, there were good and substantial reasons for retaining the system of voters' rights, and there could be no doubt they had done good service in preserving the purity of elections during the last general election. He might state that it was not in the large towns that personation would be tried on; as there was generally only one polling-place, and the electors were known to the presiding officer, the poll-clerks, the scrutineers, or other electors. It was not likely to be attempted in electorates of large geographical extent, as, if an elector voted at one polling-place, he was not likely to be able to reach another polling-place in the same day. Consequently, it was only in intermediate-sized electorates that personation was likely to be carried on. Perhaps that was the reason why it had become so common to hear personation spoken of as having been carried out in West Moreton to a great extent. It was not so easy to procure a voter's right as it would be, with a voter's right, on the polling day, to personate and vote; because there were all the hindrances to a person not

qualified getting that right. With respect to voters selling their rights, he thought there could be no question that the person who would sell his voter's right would have no hesitation in selling his vote; consequently that objection came with very little force. If it was too far for an elector to go to get his elector's right, he would not go to vote; and if he would not take the trouble to vote, it was a matter of very little consequence that he was enabled to get his voter's right. It was hardly necessary to hurry the Bill through the House; because, at the present time, all the machinery was in operation which had been provided under the Act of 1872 for issuing the voters' rights, and for electors who were very anxious to get their names on the list. Even while admitting that they had not sufficient opportunity, they had the same opportunity as hitherto. He believed that that portion of the Act which provided expressly for this matter was the most important, and it should certainly continue to command his support. With respect to sealing the ballot papers at the outside polling-places, he thought that would be a very serviceable addition to the secrecy of the ballot. He was aware that in some districts, where there were only a very few electors, they were very naturally inquisitive enough to wish to find out how many voted, how many voted for each candidate, and who had voted for each; consequently, the secrecy of the ballot was destroyed for that locality. He did not like the idea of polling districts, and he had no sympathy with any infringement of the secrecy of the ballot by allowing electors to vote openly in certain cases. Every facility should be given to voters to get their names on the list, to get their rights, and to vote once; but every hindrance should be thrown in the way of their voting more than once. With respect to the provision that returning officers must be registered electors for the district for which they acted, that was a very proper provision, and one that should have found a place in every Act which had been in force hitherto. As to the question whether the returning officer should be a Government officer, the objections made would work both ways. If a private individual acted unfairly, there was little or no hold upon him; the position of a Government officer who acted unfairly was at stake. It might be objected to him (Mr. Fryar) that not having stood a contested election, he was not in a position to speak from experience on such matters. He admitted his want of experience, but that, he thought, would, at any rate, enable him to speak as an unprejudiced witness; and from that stand he thought that the elector's right was the best provision which had hitherto been made for securing the right to the electors to vote once, and once only. He should support the second reading of the Bill, and he should strongly support the provision for collecting the electoral lists; and he should also support the retention of the electors' rights.

Mr. WIENHOLT observed that no new light had been thrown on the question. He did not intend to enter into the discussion of the Bill on the second reading; but, as the measure was one of great importance, and as every facility ought to be given for its full discussion, he should move the adjournment of the debate.

Question—That the debate be adjourned.

Mr. PALMER: Sir—I have no intention of commenting at any length upon the details of this Bill; but I do deprecate the hasty legislation which is initiated by the Government in this Bill. I am of opinion that the Act of 1872 has not had a fair trial. I do not know of any Act that has ever been tried so hard without a sufficient time having elapsed for its provisions to come into force. The Act was passed in 1872, and immediately after the lists of electors had been made out under it, a general election under the Act came on. I do say, that whatever defects may be in that Act—I think, in passing it through the House, my honorable friend the member for Bremer stated that he was quite aware there were serious defects in it which could only be remedied after they had been found out, after the Act had been in force and tried—it has done very well. I believe that it has prevented a great deal of what used to be very common in some electoral districts—personation; indeed, I may say that I am quite sure of it. Looking at the Act on the whole, and at the results of its operation—looking at the members who have been returned to this House under that Act, it can hardly be expected that I can have any very deep affection or veneration for it. Still, I believe that that part of it, a very important part—indeed the most important part of it—which provides for the elector's right has had a very good effect; and that it will be a very great mistake to remove it from the statute law of this colony. I shall not go so far as to oppose the second reading of this Bill; but I believe that the Bill can be very much amended in committee. There are several clauses in it which are bad, which would not work well, and which, instead of being any improvement on the Act of 1872, would work, on the contrary, very badly for the welfare of this colony. I I have listened with great attention to the debate which has taken place on this Bill, and, as far as I am able to judge from the temper of the House, I think there are quite as many members in favor of retaining the provision for electors' rights as there are against it. We have heard a variety of opinions on the subject, and I think the general feeling of the House, and I believe the general feeling of the country also, is in favor of electors' rights. I have no wish to restrict the franchise in any way; but I do maintain that the man who will not take the trouble to procure his electors' right for himself is not fit to have the franchise. I cannot

conceive, for one moment, that it is the duty of the Government, or of this House, to force the franchise down the throats of men who will not themselves take the trouble to register themselves as electors. I think the provision in the Bill to employ the police for the purpose of putting the electors of this colony on the roll is very bad indeed. I think it is not the duty in any way of the police, and that they should not be employed in any such service. It will, I believe, thoroughly demoralise the whole force—a force which stands second to none, not only in these colonies, but in Great Britain and Ireland. To make them the arbiters as to who is to be or who is not to be on the electoral roll, will have the effect of thoroughly demoralising the force; and, instead of our police being a credit to the colony, they may thus be turned into a disgrace to us. I have great confidence in them for their particular duties; they perform them well. That they do so, the records of the colony will show. There has never been a great crime committed in Queensland, not one murder, not one extensive robbery, that has not been traced out by our police, and the perpetrators brought to justice. If there is one, I am not aware of it, at all events. And the police are very few in number. Looking at the great extent of this colony and at the sparse population, scattered over a vast territory, it is very creditable to the police that no great crime, for years, has gone unpunished. That is because the police have been properly trained to their duties. But to put the police in the position, in fact, to elect the Legislative Assembly; to put into their hands the power to place whom they like upon the electoral roll of the colony, will be the cause of more harm than any other possible thing that can be done. They have no right to be placed in such a position, or to have such a duty imposed upon them. Their duties are wholly distinct from the collection of electoral lists. The police may, in fact, if the Bill becomes law, decide who shall be the Government of the country, or who shall be members of this House. I think it is a great mistake; and I shall, in committee, endeavor to amend the clauses referring to the collection of the electoral lists. I shall do so by striking out all mention of the police for such employment. I think it may very well be left to the different benches of the colony to appoint collectors for the several districts. I do not care who is in power, it will be found for the best to leave it to the benches to make their arrangements irrespective of the assistance of the police. If the House think that men who will not take the trouble to put themselves on the roll are entitled to the franchise and to be placed on the roll, it will be a great deal better to pay collectors of electoral lists than to appoint the police for a duty for which they are not fit, for which they were never trained or intended, which will unfit them for their proper duties, and which will end in something that we can hardly foresee. At all events, it will end, at least, I am thoroughly satisfied, in demoralising the excellent police force of the colony. I have heard objections to police magistrates and persons in the employment of the Government being appointed returning officers. I can only say, that honorable members who make those objections have never felt the difficulty of getting proper parties to act as returning officers. I have known the difficulty, for years. I have no doubt that honorable members of the present Ministry who have been in office before, have experienced it too. I say that in many districts of the colony, it is utterly impossible to get returning officers to act. You must, whether you will or not, appoint officers whom you can order to do their duty. There is one part of the Bill to which I particularly object; that is, that the returning officers shall be on the roll of the district for which they are appointed to act. The effect of that provision will be, that none of those gentlemen will get on the roll, and that the Government will be left at the last moment without a returning officer at all. Those gentlemen do not seek the situation of returning officer; it is one of trouble, and one that involves a great deal of responsibility, a great deal of correspondence, and one that they would rather be left out of. If the clause become law, the Government will not have one of their officers qualified to act as returning officers in a case of emergency. I am quite aware that this will be got over by paying a small salary for the office. On several occasions, in this House, I have pointed out the absolute necessity of fixing a salary to the position of returning officer. Instead of that arrangement being a loss to the revenue, it would be a gain; because if the Colonial Secretary has gone through the accounts in his office of the returning officers of the different districts, as I have done, he will have found that the expenses of returning officers, except they are gentlemen in the Government service, are enormous; and, however much the Under Secretary may write about it or cavil at it, it has invariably ended in the Government being obliged to pay all the charges. I say it would be an absolute saving to make the returning officers paid officers, and to make them absolutely responsible for the expenses. As it is, they send in the most astounding vouchers; and if the Colonial Secretary will look over some of the charges, they will astonish him, as they have astonished me;—and they have astonished the Under Colonial Secretary very much. I invariably said to the Under Secretary, "You may write, and write, as much as you like, but we shall have to pay it." It will ensure a positive saving to put a clause in the Bill, that there shall be so much paid for the election. Now, I can say, from my own knowledge, that there is the greatest difficulty in many districts in the Government getting anyone to act. In no instance that I

remember did I appoint a Government officer where I could get any suitable person in the district to act as returning officer. This brings me to some charges which were made against me, of course, by the Colonial Treasurer. I looked at that honorable member of the House exceedingly busy last night in giving the Attorney-General charges to fire against me; he supplied balls for his honorable colleague to fire; but very bad balls they were, and had very little effect on this child. And he has, to-night, made a specific charge against me—that I appointed Lytton a polling-place to let the warders of St. Helena vote there. For what? The Government candidate? I never understood that there was a Government candidate. So far from my doing so, the place was appointed upon the request of one of the candidates in the Bulimba election—Mr. Newton. So far from the warders of St. Helena voting for the Government candidate, I do not believe there was a man who voted there.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Doughboy.

Mr. PALMER: If the warders are not to have a vote, put it in this Bill—make a provision for excluding them from voting. If they have a vote, as by Act of Parliament they have, it is the duty of every Government to give them every facility to record it. If they are not to have a vote, disqualify them. I do not see, myself, why constables, clerks of petty sessions, and police magistrates, should be precluded from exercising the franchise, while warders and turnkeys of the gaol should have votes. But so far from my having acted in any underhand way, as was insinuated by the Colonial Treasurer, I utterly deny it. I have also been accused of interfering with elections. As Colonial Secretary, if there was any one thing that I have been more particular about than another, during my whole tenure of office, it is that I would not interfere, in any possible way, in elections. I can appeal to the Secretary for Public Works: he made an application to me—I am not aware that he was a Government candidate—to send voting papers to a particular part of his district. I was so cautious in the matter that, instead of deciding for myself, as I had a perfect right to do, I referred it to the Crown Solicitor. I think I heard the honorable member say "Quite true." I defy any member of this House to say that I ever, in my official capacity, influenced an election for this House!

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. PALMER: I deny it *in toto*. If there was any one subject on which I was more particular than another—on which my memoranda can be found in the Colonial Secretary's office, on which the Under Colonial Secretary can speak—upon every application to the office, my replies will show that I was particularly careful—it was, not to interfere with the freedom of election.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. PALMER: Now, Mr. Speaker, the honorable member at the head of the Government—I may be pardoned, I think, sir, for digressing a little from the matter under debate—last night, when he knew I could not reply, had the goodness to make certain assertions about my conduct as Colonial Secretary with respect to the Torres Straits Mail Service. I am not going into that question, to-night———

The SPEAKER: I must interrupt the honorable member. He is out of order.

Mr. PALMER: You allowed the Premier to attack me last night on this subject.

The SPEAKER: True; I inadvertently permitted a departure from the strict rule of debate, last night, for which I was taken to task. The question before the House is, the adjournment of the debate. It has nothing whatever to do with the Torres Straits Mail Service.

Mr. PALMER: I bowed to your ruling, last night, sir; and I shall always do so. I bow to it, now. I think I may say that every assertion the honorable member made about me, last night, I can contradict in the most emphatic manner, whether about the Elections Bill or any other. I have taken the trouble to go through the documents, to-day; and I think I can say and prove that not a word the honorable member said has the slightest symptom of a ground of foundation. I shall not oppose the second reading of this Bill; but I repeat, that the legislation the Bill initiates is very hasty, and that the Act of 1872 has not had a fair trial; and I say that the principle of the voters' rights is a correct one. In committee I shall introduce it again. I could go over the Bill and point out in its clauses many defects, but after this long debate there is no necessity for it. I hope, however, that honorable members will take into serious consideration that the police force, which is second to none in creation, will be utterly demoralised and ruined by being put to collect the electoral lists. Strike that provision out, and let the benches appoint their own collectors. I do not care what Government are in power, keep the police clear of political matters, and free from any interference with the elections. According to the Bill the police have no votes, yet they are to have more power over elections than any electors in the country. I hope that the House, when we go into committee, will seriously consider this.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that the honorable member for Port Curtis spoke of insinuations that he had made. He did not understand the meaning of the term insinuation, as applied to anything he had said, which, if worthy of a designation, was a direct statement, and which he now repeated. The honorable member said he had not interfered with the freedom of elections. The facts should be given, and the House would judge. At Lytton, a polling-place was appointed, where there were only two registered electors,

and where it was perfectly well known to the late Colonial Secretary, they were not residents at all. If the Colonial Secretary appointed a polling-place, whether on the application of one or of both candidates, he ought to have satisfied himself that it was required. That honorable gentleman refused to appoint a polling-place at Brisbane, although informed that one hundred to one hundred and fifty electors would find it a convenient place. When applied to, he answered that there was another polling-place within a mile of the proposed locality—that polling-place was at the junction of the old Cleveland and Logan roads, more than a mile away. It must have been known to the honorable gentleman that a number of electors were in Brisbane who must either go right down to Bulimba or cross the ferry to South Brisbane to record their votes, and who could only go to the poll in their dinner hour. The honorable gentleman exceeded the line of his duty when he attempted to disfranchise one hundred and fifty electors in Brisbane. How differently he exercised his power in the case of the sixteen warders of St. Helena! They would have voted at Lytton, where it would have been virtually known how every man had voted, so that it would have been equivalent to open voting. But when the little game became known, what was the effect? The men had no desire to go six miles further to vote, but, under instructions, they were pulled six miles up the river, on a hot November day, to Doughboy Creek, and they voted at the polling-place there. If it was perfectly proper for the Government to appoint Lytton a polling-place, why was not the original intention carried out? Why were the sixteen warders brought six miles further and marched, under the control of their superintendent, to vote at Doughboy? If the honorable gentleman thought that was a legitimate transaction, no one else thought so.

Mr. BEATTIE said it was his intention to support the second reading of the Bill. When the late Government carried the Act of 1872, he had not the slightest doubt their intentions were good; but the introduction of the elector's right was not judicious in so far as the general body of the electors was concerned. There were a great many restrictions in the way of electors getting their names on the roll; and when they were on, there were further restrictions and difficulties attending the procuring of the voter's right. He knew from his own experience that in the late election for Fortitude Valley, when electors applied for their voters' rights, the individual who was appointed to issue the rights took ten or twelve minutes, on an average, to get each right ready; and the consequence was, that during the dinner hour, when it was necessary to get all the voters possible, all the rights issued amounted to six in number. With reference to the remarks of the honorable member for Springsure, who had made a comparison with other electorates and Fortitude Valley, and who had stated that although the number of electors on the roll of that district was 1,080, yet only 600 voters' rights were issued; thus leading the House to believe his deductions, that the 400 electors who did not apply for their rights were either dead men or not in existence——

Mr. J. SCOTT: Hear, hear.

Mr. BEATTIE: He could tell the House that a great many applications had been made for electors' rights, but from the manner in which the restrictions, or the want of ability in issuing the rights operated, and notwithstanding that it was a matter of importance to the electors to get their rights—instances were known in which electors had applied a dozen times for them, calling for weeks consecutively—the applications were ineffective, and numerous electors could not get their rights. He might inform the House that the electorate which he had the honor to represent was composed of working men, and that the only time they had to get their rights was their dinner hour. That was the answer he had to give the honorable member why a number of his constituents had not taken part in the late election. He disagreed with the honorable member for Port Curtis, when he stated his opinion, which ought to have a great deal of weight with every member of the House, that the efficiency of the police would be affected injuriously by the duty imposed upon them under the Bill. He had no hesitation in saying that a better force was not in existence, but he could not go so far as to say that if the police collected the electoral lists, they would be demoralised; because, in his experience of the other colonies, for five-and-twenty years past, that was the manner in which the electoral lists had been collected—in New South Wales it was so, and he did not know that the performance of the duty had had the effect of demoralising the force. From the character the honorable gentleman had given the police of this colony, and because he (Mr. Beattie) believed they were men of very great ability, he thought the little additional duty would not have that bad effect upon them, and that the police were the very best men that could be appointed to collect the electoral lists. There were some objections which he would, with other honorable members, take to certain clauses of the Bill at the proper time; but he thought it would be a great improvement on the Act of 1872, and he believed it would be for the advantage of the country, as he took it to be the duty of the Government not to throw difficulties in the way of anyone who wished to have the opportunity of exercising the franchise.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY believed there could be no doubt that the second reading of the Bill, at any rate, would be carried. He could not allow the honorable member for Port Curtis to take advantage of a formal motion for the adjournment of the debate in order to make statements in answer to certain

assertions which he made last night with regard to a particular service.

Mr. PALMER rose to order. He was not allowed to go on by the Speaker.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Surely he was in order. The honorable member had made statements, that what he (the Colonial Secretary) asserted last night was unfounded;—well, he only asserted what was reported from the honorable member's own lips. He should not detain the House further on that matter; but he came, now, to the prophecies of the honorable member as to what would take place if the Bill should be carried. The honorable member reminded him of the Witch of Endor prophesying before Saul—his prophecies would turn out to be very empty. The police of the colony had been employed to collect the electoral lists up to 1860; and the reason for changing the system then in force was not that which was assigned in the House, that they did not put the electors' names on the roll, but it had been asserted that too many names were put on the roll. Of course, if that was the case, it became necessary that the duties of the men should be well and distinctly defined. The provisions of the Bill would do that; and the arguments which had been brought forward to show why the police should not be employed were the very arguments which were most forcible in favor of their employment. They were a superior class of men; they were well trained; they ought to know every elector in their districts; they had not sufficient work on their hands, as far as he could discover, to prevent them performing the duty of collectors; and if money could be saved to the state by employing them instead of other persons, the Government could not do better than employ the police. That they would become demoralised by going round and collecting the names of the electors—he was astonished that such a statement should come from the honorable member for Port Curtis. He believed that their contact with the people of the colony would be of great use to them, both socially and morally. He submitted that there was nothing in the objections against the collection of the electoral lists by the police. All the arguments were in favor of that excellent force being employed. With regard to the payment of returning officers, he must say that he approved of paying them; but he did not approve of the proposition that had been made, that the returning officers should receive a lump sum for all expenses. It was scarcely possible to say what the expenses would be until the accounts came in. To expect a returning officer to take £50 or £100 to act in a contested election would be to expect what no man would do.

Mr. PALMER, in explanation, said, he had spoken of a sum to cover the returning officer's own expenses.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That was a very different matter. He certainly thought that the returning officer's services were entitled to be recognised, and a small sum by way of *honorarium*, should be given to him. The honorable member for Enoggera took objection to the fourth clause of the Bill. In framing that clause, certain facts had to be kept in view, which he stated to the House last night. The first was, that in certain electorates—unless where there had been fierce contests, where every man had had an inducement to take out his voter's right—absolutely one half of the electors had not taken out their rights; and for them the clause would be a protective one, as it enacted that those electors, instead of being struck off the roll, which they would be, without the clause, would remain on it until the end of the year, when the Bill would come fully into operation.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: With regard to the objection taken to the second subsection of the 53rd clause by the honorable member for Bremer and others, he pointed out that open voting would be the result of an elector's own conduct, and it depended on the answer which he might give to the question embodied in the clause: if the elector's qualification was not in the district assigned to the polling-place, his vote was to be taken openly; if his answer was in the affirmative, then he was entitled to vote under the ballot. The objection was a mistake. With regard to the objection taken to the presiding officers not being returning officers, he answered that last night; inasmuch, as if the 60th clause was not carried out, under which the presiding officers must seal and send the ballot papers to the returning officers, without examination, the voting in certain districts might as well be open voting. Cases had been stated to the House, and that of the sixteen warders of St. Helena, mentioned by the Colonial Treasurer, was such a case. Those men had been brought to a polling-place where no other electors had voted; it would not have been difficult to have told how every one had voted. There were places in the interior where only a small number of electors voted, and where it would not be difficult to find out from the ballot paper whom each had voted for: there was no difficulty, honorable members knew, when almost every sheep-station in the country was made a polling-place, in election times.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It would be perfectly easy for a proprietor to know how everyone on his station had voted. If there was to be vote by ballot, the presiding officer at such polling-place should have no right to examine the ballot papers. The clause following the one objected to, if honorable members would look at it, provided that the returning officer himself should examine and count all the ballot papers from each presiding officer. But he also had some objection to the clause,

and he should add a few words to amend it; and he proposed further to insert a new provision to prevent the disclosure of votes at particular polling-places:—

"If there shall be more than one polling-place within any electoral district it shall not be lawful for any returning officer presiding officer poll clerk candidate or scrutineer to disclose or make public in any way the number of votes received by any candidate at any particular polling-place within such electoral district And every person who shall offend herein shall forfeit the sum of two hundred pounds to be recovered by any person who shall sue for the same by action of debt to be commenced within six months after the committal of the offence."

With that addition, any difficulty which was thought likely to arise would be done away with. He should not go into any other objections at this time; he should be able to meet all that he had heard with regard to the Bill, and he hoped that there was no further obstacle to the second reading.

Mr. WIENHOLT desired to withdraw his motion for adjournment.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. FRASER observed that, for the sake of his constituency, that was very much interested in the question, and that would be very considerably affected by the decision of the House, he did not feel disposed to give a silent vote. He recognised two important principles in the Bill, which commended themselves to his judgment and which were the main reason why he supported the second reading. The first was, the intention to do away with the voters' rights; the next was, the proposal to collect the names of those persons who ought to be on the electoral roll. He was not at all surprised that the honorable member for Bremer should make a very strenuous effort in defence of the Act of 1872. It was quite natural that the author of that measure should have a peculiar affection for it; but he must say, for himself, that whatever that honorable member's experience might have been in connection with the operation of that Act, in a contested election, it was not only a failure in the principal object contemplated by the issue of electors' rights, but it had become and had proved itself to be a peculiar hardship upon the electors of his district. He believed that his opinion and experience would be corroborated by most honorable members who had had to stand contested elections. He had not the slightest doubt that, in framing the Elections Act of 1872, the author sincerely contemplated and indeed expected that he was presenting a barrier to personation which it would be impossible to overstep; but the Act, instead of proving a protection against personation, had been found and had become the very instrument to effect more successfully, in his (Mr. Fraser's) own case, than even before, personation. And it had been found to be so in many other cases. He regarded all such attempts to prevent personation as utterly useless. It was one of the cases of over legislation which invariably failed to carry out or accomplish the purpose intended. He contended that smaller electorates and better arrangements in the polling-booths, and attaching due penalties to the offence, would be found more effective against personation than any enactment such as that now in existence. He could not see why, having given to the people of the country the right of franchise with the one hand, they should step forward and with the other hand deprive them of it, for that had been literally the case, so far as the voters' rights were concerned. Objections had been urged against any attempt to thrust the franchise upon the unwilling portion of the community, and honorable members had been told that, unless people appreciated and prized that right, they did not deserve to have it. There was, no doubt, a great deal of plausible force in that remark, but, at the same time, he did not think it would bear any amount of investigation. It was well known that not only in this colony, but in other countries, it was a most difficult thing to stir up a community to a sense, not only of its rights, but of its duties; and he thought they could not pursue a better course, in a young colony like this, than to attempt to bring home to the inhabitants of it a proper sense of their duties. It must also be remembered that the great bulk of the inhabitants of the colony had not been trained to it; that they belonged principally to a class who did not enjoy the same privileges of franchise in the old country; and he maintained, therefore, that in the future interests of the colony, it was the duty of Parliament—their interest at all events, to bring those matters home to the people, and make them see that it was their duty to take an interest in the political affairs of their adopted country; whether with the aid of police in collecting the rolls or not—it was their duty as a Parliament to make the people alive to their interests and their duties. So far as his own knowledge of the working of the system of voters' rights went, and so far as his electorate was concerned, there was but one opinion from one end to the other on the subject—which was that the whole affair merited condemnation; he was, therefore, pleased to support the removal of that obstacle, whether that removal was embodied in any Bill, such as the Bill before the House. He was sorry that the honorable member for Port Curtis was not present, as it was but on the previous evening that that honorable member had rated the honorable member at the head of the Government with having failed to embody in the legislation which he had introduced to that House the conditions of that great Ipswich manifesto, of which honorable members had heard of much; yet that very honorable member had only that evening condemned the Government for their

hasty legislation in bringing forward the present measure. He believed that the Elections Bill was one of the matters involved in the celebrated manifesto, and, therefore, he could not help thinking that the honorable member for Port Curtis was not quite so true to, and consistent with, himself, as he usually was. Having said so much as a reason why he should support the second reading of the Bill, he would remark that it did not commit him to all the clauses and details of it; for, in common with some preceding honorable speakers, there were some matters to which he must take exception, and which he would like to see amended, when the Bill was in committee; he thought they would be able to accomplish that. He believed that the honorable member for Port Curtis was out of his calculation, when he inferred that the greater number of honorable members who had spoken on the Bill were inclined to retain the electors' rights, simply because they said they could not support the Bill in all its details. In the first place, in regard to the 7th clause, it was inconsistent, and he considered a portion of it should be expunged, and for the following reason: that whilst it professed to give a residence qualification it retained the old property qualification, which still remained on the Statute Book. He knew that he might be met with the old argument, that property as well as individuals ought to be represented, but he confessed he could not see the force of it; he maintained that one man's right in the community was just as great as another's, and that although he might not be the owner of thousands of broad acres, yet his interest was as great in regard to the making of the laws under which he lived. The interest of the poor man who was called upon to discharge the duties of citizenship was just as great as that of the largest land-owner, and he held that the proper qualification was the right of every colonist—of every man in the community, who was expected to obey the laws and discharge the duties of a colonist—to have a voice in the making of those laws; he maintained, in short, that no extent of property could give additional rights, and therefore he would be glad to see the property qualification struck out of the Bill. There was a tendency all over the world to extend the franchise, and to place it on a more equitable footing; and although it might not be well in all cases to follow the example of America, yet that country was an instance where franchise, without any property qualification, was working well. There was also a minor matter in clause 22—that no candidate for election, or member of the Legislative Assembly, should take part in the revision of any list. Now, he thought, in practice, that it would be found desirable to give that privilege to members of both Houses, in certain cases. However, it would be a matter for the committee to decide. He decidedly objected to clause 37—that any candidate nominated for election as a member of the Assembly should be called upon to deposit a sum of twenty pounds. He would call attention to an inconsistency in connection with that. They had just passed a Bill for the payment of members, and the object of that legislation was to enable a constituency to elect any one of their number who was an elector—that being a sufficient qualification for a member of that House; yet, whilst they gave that privilege, they imposed a condition which, in many cases, might act most unjustly. For instance, the circumstances of a candidate in whom the electors had every confidence might be such that he could not afford to deposit £20, and that would have the effect of shutting him out from the House. He did not think it was worth while retaining a provision like that in the Bill. Again, in regard to clause 53, which had been alluded to by the honorable the Colonial Secretary, he must confess that he had a decided objection to those questions being put to voters; he did not think that any amount of artificial barriers with which they might surround personation would prevent it. It was said that a carriage and four could be driven through every Act of Parliament, and on that principle he thought it would be far better, with the present system of small electorates, to leave it to the honor of electors. Let every man holding a voter's right feel that his honor was at stake, and he thought there would be less heard of personation. Again, those precautions against personation might have the effect of putting honest men to great personal inconvenience, so that it would be punishing the majority for the sake of the few. He should not trespass upon the time of the House any longer, and for the reasons he had stated he should certainly give a most cordial support to the second reading of the Bill; and would express a hope that it would speedily become the law of the land. He was confident that every elector would thank the Government for having removed obstructions out of his way—obstructions which were an insult to every honest elector in Queensland.

Mr. Foote (who was very indistinctly heard) was understood to say, that it had been stated that the Elections Act of 1872 had scarcely come up to what had been anticipated from it. That might be the case, but he thought the fault rested principally with those who had had the administration of it. It was a new measure, and consequently was one with which the community, as a body, were not acquainted. There were certainly some good clauses in the present Act, and he thought the cause of its failure was, the want of a clause, inserted in the proposed Bill, namely, that which provided that the police should collect the names of persons to be placed on the rolls. He believed that if that had been inserted in

the present Act, they would not have required any improvement upon it, and that it would have answered all the purposes for which it was intended. In reference to voters' rights, he was not inclined to agree with the observations of many honorable members who had spoken of the obstruction and difficulties they were supposed to offer in the way of electors recording their votes. He thought the system had its good points as well as its bad ones; it had at least one good effect—namely, that of purifying the rolls to a very considerable extent, and for which he was sorry to say he did not see any provision in the Bill now proposed to be passed by that House. He wished to refer to the clause which empowered the revision court to strike off the names of those parties who had not applied for electors' rights during the past year, and he would take that opportunity of calling attention to the fact that the power of the revising bench was very limited. The honorable Colonial Secretary had told them that they would have the power to strike off all the dead men, but that was a very limited power, as there it stopped; the provisions of the Bill should, he thought, go further than that, and should give greater powers to the revision court. It was well known that all the personations were of persons whose names were known to have been on the roll, and who had either left the colony or had gone to another part of it. If a man was in the colony for a short time, he had his name placed on the roll; but he was comparatively unknown except to a few, and when he left the district, advantage was taken of his absence, and he was personated. He knew a case where a bench of magistrates sat up all of one night for the purpose of revising the roll. That bench was constituted of magistrates from all the surrounding districts, and notices were issued to those electors who were known by various members of the bench to be absent from the colony; and, as they did not attend, their names were struck out; but in the following week another revision court sat, and undid in ten minutes all that had been previously done. Now, he maintained that a bench of magistrates should have the power of striking off not only the names of dead men, but also those of parties who were known to be absent from the colony, and, therefore, known to have no qualification. In reference to clause 60, he thought that it was very good, and strictly in accordance with the secrecy of the ballot; but, at the same time, he could not see how it would answer the purpose for which it was intended. The apparent object of it was to protect parties in the outside districts where there were only a few men employed, so that, when political pressure was brought to bear, it should not be known how they voted. As to the collection of the rolls by the police constables, he was of opinion that the police should be employed for that purpose. However, with those amendments he had mentioned, and some others, he believed the Bill would be found to work exceedingly well, and he should, therefore, support the second reading.

Mr. NIND said that, like the honorable member for Bandamba, he did not feel inclined on the present occasion to give a silent vote, but at the same time he did not desire to occupy much time with the remarks he had to make, more especially after such a long debate as had already taken place. He should like to say on what grounds he should vote for the second reading, and at the same time to point out what he thought had escaped the notice of those honorable members who had addressed the House. In the first place, the substance of the Bill appeared principally to be in the abolition of voters' rights, and declarations before magistrates; and he certainly considered, notwithstanding what had fallen from certain honorable members, that those voters' rights had never been a safeguard against personation, but only against double voting. He thought, however, more stress had been laid upon that question than was necessary, and that the statements regarding personation had been greatly exaggerated. He did not think there had been more than two or three cases throughout the whole colony, and honorable members were certainly not there to legislate for a few exceptional cases. If there was an evil he thought it laid not so much in the few instances of personation as in the obstruction which was offered to electors by having to make declarations, and to take out voters' rights. The honorable member for Port Curtis stated that his measure had not had a fair chance; and it might not have had a fair one; but so far as he could speak from his own experience, the voters' rights were most objectionable, and had in many cases resulted in the actual disfranchisement of a large number of persons. It had been stated by the honorable member for the Normanby that the indolence of the people in the colony should be overcome by making the means of voting as easy as possible to them; he believed there was a great deal of political indolence, but he did not think that the great majority of the people were imbued with it, as, if that was the case, they were not worthy of the many fine institutions they possessed. He would not take the clauses of the Bill one by one, as it was too late to do so, and as they had already been either defended or objected to by honorable members on both sides of the House; but he certainly thought there was one clause—clause 60—which he should like to see struck out, as it placed too much power in the hands of any Executive. He thought the Bill was better than any they had had yet, but yet there should be provision made in it that as little power as possible should remain in the hands of the Executive; it should not be in the power of an Executive to say where there should be polling-places, but should be left to the candidates

themselves to ask for a polling-place, and on their showing sufficient grounds, it should be granted. He also thought that the returning officer should not be allowed to hold any other public office. The part of the Bill to which he wished more especially to refer, and which had not yet been touched upon, was in clause 7—the qualification clause. It was very well to say that every man who was a naturalized subject of Her Majesty should have a vote, but by the time he had his name on the roll no one had a right to question him as to whether he was naturalized or not; he thought that that question might be put in the form of an addition to the questions contained in clause 51. It might be asked, "Are you a British subject?" He did not think that the privilege of being a British subject should be hastily granted; he looked upon it as a great privilege, one which a man should, before obtaining it, be able to estimate at its true value, and which he could not get too cheaply. In other countries the right of citizenship was considered a very high privilege, and in America, especially, it was surrounded by many provisions and formalities; in fact, a man had to go through two processes before he could claim to be an American citizen. He maintained that to become a British subject was as good as becoming an American citizen, if not better. To be a Roman citizen was considered the highest privilege, and was accompanied by many immunities, and he considered that it should be considered an equal privilege to be a British subject. He considered that those people who were coming to this colony, from all parts of Europe, should show that they were imbued with a knowledge of the institutions of the country in which they resided, before they could claim to be naturalised subjects of Her Majesty, and should not have ideas contrary to the constitution under which they intended to live. He was anxious to call the attention of the honorable the Colonial Secretary to that point, as he considered that it was an important one at the present time, although lightly regarded; some day it would prove to be more important, although now it was being slurred over. He should support the Bill, although he would have some amendments to propose when it was in committee.

Mr. Fitzgerald rose to say that he would gladly support the second reading of the Bill, as he had gone to that House pledged to his constituents to do all in his power to get the abolition of voters' rights. As there was no opposition to the Bill, he did not feel inclined to take up the time of the House with any further remarks, but would reserve them until the Bill was in committee.

Mr. Edmondstone said he rose simply for the purpose of saying that he should support the second reading of the Bill, believing it was a step altogether in the right direction.

The question was put and passed, and the House went into committee upon the Bill.