Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 22 JANUARY 1884

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 22 *January*, 1884.

Member Sworn.—Elections and Qualifications Committee.—Petitions.—Questions.—Question without Notice.—Elections Act of 1874 Amendment Bill—committee.—Adjournment.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

MEMBER SWORN.

Mr. Donald Smith Wallace took the oath and subscribed the roll as member for the Electoral District of Clermont.

ELECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE.

Mr. Justin Fox Greenlaw Foxton was sworn at the table as a member of the Elections and Qualifications Committee.

PETITIONS.

Mr. BEATTIE presented a petition from Charles Francis Cummings against his dismissal from the Public Service, and praying that the House would take his case into consideration.

Petition read and received.

Mr. BLACK presented a petition from over 700 working men and others, residing at Mackay, protesting against the employment of time-expired Polynesians.

Petition read and received.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. ALAND asked the Minister for Works—

1. Does the running of goods trains on the Southern and Western line on Sundays necessitate the attendance of station-masters and other officials at the various stations along the line?

2. Do the station-masters and other officials stationed beyond Ipswich receive any extra payment for such attendance?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) replied—

1. The attendance of station-masters and other officials is not required on all stations and stopping-places, but only at the principal stations.

2. Yes.

Mr. JESSOP asked the Attorney-General—

What fee has been paid to Mr. F. Sheridan for his services in the prosecution of Mr. Dart; also, what was paid to the same gentleman for his services as junior counsel in the "Alfred Vittery" case?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) replied—

Fifteen guineas in each case.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked the Premier, without notice—

If he can give this House any information as to when the session is likely to terminate, and also whether he intends to keep the House sitting until the Bills now upon the business-paper have been dealt with.

Perhaps the hon. gentleman would prefer that notice should be given.

The PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith) said he could answer the question as well now as to-morrow. He thought it quite impossible for him to say at present when the session was likely to terminate. It depended very much upon the will of the House itself. He hoped it would not be very long; but there was a good deal of business which must necessarily be done, such as the passing of the Estimates. He looked forward to a speedy termination of the session, especially as there must be another session commencing at the latest in June. As to whether the House was to sit until all the Bills on the paper were disposed of, that was a question he could not at present answer.

ELECTIONS ACT OF 1874 AMENDMENT BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee to consider this Bill in detail.

Preamble postponed.

Clause 1—"To be read with principal Act"—passed as printed.

On clause 2—"Repeal of section 56 of principal Act"—

Mr. MACROSSAN said he objected to the repeal of the section, and should object to every clause after this one. If that section were repealed, sections 53, 54, and 55, which were

exempt from application to the goldfields by the principal Act, would be applied to the goldfields; and the Premier must remember, also, that there was a very large portion of the people on those goldfields whose profession was very similar to that of the gold-miner—they were employed on the tin-mines. The hon. gentleman, he thought, had entirely forgotten that. In putting in clause 9 the hon. gentleman was, no doubt, under the impression that he had qualified the repeal of the 56th section of the principal Act; but the qualification was only partial. He (Mr. Macrossan) explained that, he thought, very fully the other night; and if he designated the Bill as a Bill to disfranchise country electors, he thought that would be the proper term for it. If hon. members would take the trouble to read over the polling places gazetted at the last general election, they would find that the Bill did not apply to the principal districts of the colony, which were represented by hon. members on the Government side, such as North and South Brisbane, Fortitude Valley, Ipswich, Rockhampton, Maryborough, Gympie, and other places where the population was central. It applied more especially to the Western and Northern districts, which would be disfranchised. There was only one—or at the most two—polling places in any of those electorates which he had mentioned; but the Bill especially dealt with places that had more than two polling places. He thought if the Premier wished to do his duty to all parts of the country alike, he would wait and bring in a thorough Bill dealing with the whole question of the franchise—repealing the Act of 1874, if necessary, and also amending the last Act, and not deal with it in the pettifogging manner he was adopting during the present session. At all events, he gave the hon. gentleman fair warning that he should not easily allow clause 2 or any of the succeeding clauses to pass. He took his stand on the rights of the people in the Northern districts to have it in their power in every way to record their votes, which the present Bill would deprive them of. In the electorate of Cook, and also his (Mr. Macrossan's) electorate, there was a number of timber-getters. There was also a large number of carriers and carters. Then there was a large number of wages men on the goldfields who were not holders of miners' rights. There were men employed at machinery, and assistants to storekeepers; and also a large number occasionally employed about sugar plantations on the Herbert, in Mackay, and other places. Those men were not constantly fixed—they went from one place to another; nevertheless, they had settled abodes, where they left their wives and families. If any of those men left the district and went to the Herbert to the sugar harvest to assist in the production of sugar, and an election took place in their absence, they would be deprived of their votes. He thought that, at a reasonable estimate, the Bill would disfranchise 4,000 or 5,000 electors in the Northern and Western districts, and therefore he protested against the Bill being passed.

The PREMIER said he never anticipated that the Bill would meet with the approval of the hon. member for Townsville. The Bill consisted of two parts. The first part related to electors whose qualification was residence, but who, ceasing to be residents, ceased to have a qualification; yet who, nevertheless, had shown at the late election that they could crop up from all parts of the colony and vote in large numbers. That was admitted.

Mr. MACROSSAN: I put you to the proof of that; it is simply your assertion.

The PREMIER: It was admitted by everyone except the hon. member for Townsville. Yet he had given most ample proof of it by saying that fifty or sixty men who had ceased to reside in his district, but whose names were on the roll, though they no longer possessed a qualification, had voted. The hon. gentleman said there was no proof, and the only hon. gentleman who disputed the assertion had himself supplied the proof. That was the first part of the Bill, to prevent persons who were disqualified from exercising the franchise. The hon. member complained that they were disfranchising those men, but he did not believe they could rightly use the term "disfranchising" to the process of preventing men who were not entitled to vote from voting. That was not the correct epithet to apply to that process. Disfranchising was preventing men who were entitled to vote from voting; and that the Government would be very loath indeed to do. The second part of the Bill, however, related to an entirely different subject; it related to the fact that persons personating at an election usually chose as the field of their operations places where they were not likely to be recognised. The second part of the Bill endeavoured to guard against that. In the Act of 1874, which had been on the statute-book now for ten years, power was given to the Governor to institute polling districts—that was to say, to assign to every polling place an area, and to make it compulsory for every elector whose qualification arose in that area to vote in it. That provision of the Act of 1874 had not, he believed, been enforced, but from that time it had never been objected to. He believed it had never been put into force legally, although some returning officers had acted as if such polling districts had been appointed. The second part of the Bill gave an additional power: it enabled the Governor to order that an elector should vote at some place near where he lived—at some place where he was likely to be recognised. No objection could be made to that which was not equally applicable and with much greater force to the provision for polling districts which had been their law for so long. He did not care about *tu quoque* arguments, but the hon. gentleman said he ought to deal with the subject in a complete Bill, and he might reply that although the Government of which the hon. gentleman was a member brought in a Bill dealing with elections, it evidently did not occur to them to deal with that part of the subject. The provisions contained in the second part of the Bill were not compulsory, but optional. There were many electorates to which he freely admitted the provisions of that part of the Bill were inapplicable—for instance, the case referred to by the hon. member for Burke the other night. He freely admitted that in the case of such an electorate it would be an injustice to make every elector vote at the place nearest where his qualification was. One hon. gentleman on the other side objected that the provisions should be made compulsory instead of optional; the reason they were not was owing to the circumstances to which the hon. member for Burke alluded. The hon. member for Townsville said it would disfranchise a number of people in gold-mining districts. He did not think that was so, for there were very few men in gold-mining districts who had not miners' rights. It was true, however, that there were some who had not, and more especially perhaps in tin-mining districts of the northern part of the colony; but he did not think they were of so nomadic a disposition as the hon. member for Townsville gave them credit for. He was under the impression that they were not to be found so far away from where their qualification arose—unless, indeed, they multiplied the number of

polling places to such an extent that they would have ten or twenty in an area of as many miles. Supposing them to be placed at a reasonable distance apart, he thought there were very few people who would not be able to vote at the place nearest to where their qualification arose. It was impossible that there could be any scheme formed that would absolutely prevent fraud or injustice. They might at once recognise that as an axiom. But it was possible for them to prevent fraud to a very large extent, and to do as little injustice as they possibly could. He took it for granted that it was the desire of members to prevent fraud as much as they possibly could, and several members on both sides had expressed that as their intention. If, however, they did as the hon. member for Townsville said he would do—namely, do their best to prevent the Bill passing—he did not think they would be showing any desire to prevent fraud at elections. The second part of the Bill consisted of the 6th, 7th, and 8th sections. The 9th section related to goldfields only, and therefore would not apply to any of the grievances the hon. member had so eloquently referred to. It was equally inapplicable with the 56th section of the principal Act. The 56th section of the principal Act dealt entirely with goldfields. The hon. gentleman referred to wages men and machine men on the goldfields who had no miners' rights, but he did not think they were very numerous. The object of the 56th section of the principal Act, of course, was to except persons who might be supposed to be of nomadic habits, and he did not think they were as numerous as the hon. member seemed to think. He did not think much injury would be done—very little, in fact—whereas the safeguard provided by the Bill would be very great. He would say one word more. The hon. gentleman asked why they did not bring in a complete Bill, entirely reforming the electoral system. The hon. member knew well that it was perfectly impossible to do so at the present time, and he doubted whether it would be possible during the next session of the House, considering the heavy business they were pledged to undertake. He hoped the hon. gentleman would not be found to be a maintainer of abuses, as the Bill which he said he would oppose struck at acknowledged abuses plainly and distinctly, so as to render their commital in the future absolutely impossible.

Mr. MACROSSAN said that the hon. member ought to give him credit for knowing something more about goldfields than he did himself; for while he visited them occasionally, and only occasionally, he (Mr. Macrossan) had almost been reared on a goldfield, and had been accustomed to goldfields for the last thirty years, more or less, though somewhat less since he had become a member of that House. The hon. member was utterly mistaken when he said that almost all the people on a goldfield had miners' rights. He might say that the time was when they had, when no man could work on a goldfield without one, and he could be taken up and punished unless he had a miner's right; but that time had gone, and he could tell the hon. gentleman that now there were not 20 per cent. of the people on a goldfield who had miners' rights. As to their not being nomadic, he could tell him that the tin-miners now were even more nomadic than the gold-miners, for the simple reason that there was more alluvial tin being worked at the present time than alluvial gold. At the present moment he made bold to say that in the electorate of Cook there were at least 300 or 400 men who were waiting for rain; men who had heaped up their washdirt months ago and gone back there in the expectation of the usual rains following. Those men worked until the water failed them; they then went away from the district leaving their washdirt registered, so that no one could touch it, and after remaining away about six months came back again. The hon. gentleman did not know those things. He (Mr. Macrossan) maintained that tin-miners were more nomadic than gold-miners. As to the Bill being a complete block to all fraud that might be perpetrated in the carrying out of elections, he had no desire to enter into particulars about the causes, but the hon. gentleman must know that by far the greater number of frauds had been perpetrated in centres of population than in the outside districts. He must know that an hon. member of that House who was no longer a member of it—a former Premier of the party now in power—used to pride himself on the number of frauds he perpetrated at elections. The hon. gentleman knew to whom he (Mr. Macrossan) alluded; he knew also that men had actually voted ten and eleven times at Ipswich, and yet this Bill did not apply to Ipswich, because it had only one polling place. He could tell the hon. member that he believed that more frauds had been perpetrated in the city of Brisbane during the elections than in any other part of the colony.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side: Ridiculous! absurd!

Mr. MACROSSAN: He did not refer merely to North Brisbane, but included the three electorates of Brisbane. The hon. gentleman also said that he (Mr. Macrossan) had furnished proof himself of men having voted who had no right to vote; but the men he referred to had a right to vote, and the hon. gentleman wished to deprive them of it. Those men were duly registered upon the electoral roll for Townsville in Herberton. They were tin-miners, and finding tin-mining there not profitable they left the district and went to Charters Towers, but had not been long enough there to have their names registered for that electorate. Their names were still upon the Townsville roll; they had a right to vote; and no man was justified in attempting to deprive such men of their votes. That was his contention—that the Bill would deprive such men of their votes. The hon. gentleman stated on the second reading of the Bill that no doubt men who had left one electorate would be registered for another one; but he knew that they must be six months resident, or perhaps nine, before they could be registered; and those men would be deprived of their votes simply because their habits were nomadic. Were they not as useful citizens as the tinkers or tailors of Brisbane? He did not speak only in the interest of gold-miners and tin-miners. Did the hon. gentleman forget that the whole of the Western districts were peopled by persons who were nomadic in their habits? He held that the Bill would tend to disfranchise those men, and therefore he again entered his protest against it, and would do his very best to prevent it passing—because it could not be amended so as to prevent those men from being deprived of their votes. He had as much interest in preventing frauds at elections as the hon. gentleman or any other member of the House had. During the election at Townsville he did his best to prevent frauds, and succeeded in preventing many, and no doubt other hon. members did the same in other electorates. But what he wanted to prevent was the honest man being deprived of his vote. The hon. gentleman knew the axiom of English law, "that it was better that ten guilty men should escape than that one innocent man should be punished"; and he (Mr. Macrossan) said that if this Bill were passed, not only would ten guilty escape, but they would all escape, just as before. He was afraid the hon. gentleman could frame no law that

would prevent dishonesty, if men were inclined to be dishonest. He might make it somewhat more difficult; but it was easy to frame a law which would prevent honest men from recording their votes legally, as they ought to be allowed to. He hoped the hon. gentleman would consider the position he occupied. He had given no promise to introduce a Bill of this kind. He understood that the hon. gentleman was compelled by promise to introduce Bills to repeal the Indian Labourers Act and the Preliminary Companies Railway Act; but he was under no such promise with regard to this Bill, and he (Mr. Macrossan) hoped that he would hold his hand and not tell him that, because the Government of which he (Mr. Macrossan) was a member in 1879 did not bring in a Bill dealing with the whole question, therefore he should not do so. The Government of 1879 did not think it necessary to do so; but they brought in a Bill to enfranchise, not to disfranchise—a Bill to give greater facilities to men to get their votes registered—while this Bill actually deprived them of their right to record their votes. As to a deal of work being on hand for the next session, and it being impossible to bring in a Bill dealing with the whole question this session, where was the urgency for it? Did they expect a general election within a year or two? He thought there was no likelihood of it; and, therefore, why should they not wait until they were able to deal with the whole question, instead of tinkering with it, in the present fashion? He hoped the hon. gentleman would not press such a Bill, but that he would take counsel with his better self and withdraw it.

Mr. STEVENSON: Where is his better self?

Mr. MOREHEAD said he should like to hear the hon. the Attorney-General on the subject, because he represented a district that would be most materially affected by the passing of the measure, if the contention of the hon. member for Townsville was correct, and so far he thought that hon. member had the best of the argument. He would further point out to the Committee that it was a technical question—the introduction of the Bill at all. It assumed that certain irregularities had taken place, which had not yet been proved to have occurred; and practically it was prejudging cases that were *sub judice*, and had yet to come before the House. He thought it would have been much wiser on the part of the Government if they had waited for the evidence that would be taken before the Elections and Qualifications Committee before attempting legislation on the subject. They would then be much better up in the subject than they were at present. So far not even a *primâ facie* case had been made out in favour of the contention put by the Premier; and without more information on those matters they should not attempt to legislate. He thought the majority of the Committee would agree with him that it would have been much better if the Government had waited until they were prepared to introduce a Bill dealing with the whole question, rather than patching up a most important law dealing with the electoral rights of the people of the colony. The hon. gentleman asked why the late Government did not bring in such a measure in 1879? and, in reply, he said that possibly and probably there was no necessity for any legislation in the direction indicated by the Premier; nor did he see that there was any necessity for patching up the existing law by the Bill before them. As had been pointed out by hon. members, there was no immediate hurry for legislation in that direction, as there were not likely to be any considerable number of vacancies occur in that House, unless some awful catastrophe happened which none of them could foresee. Therefore there was plenty of time for the Government to bring down a properly prepared measure. He thought, after the arguments of the hon. member for Townsville with regard to the disfranchising effects of the Bill upon large electorates, it ought to be withdrawn. He hoped to hear something from the Attorney-General—his opinion on the question from a legal point of view—especially as his electorate was one of those which would be prejudicially affected by the action of the Bill should it become law.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the apprehensions expressed by the hon. member for Townsville with regard to the injurious effect the Bill would have on a great many electors on goldfields were somewhat groundless. He said a great proportion of those who were resident on goldfields were wages men. That was perfectly true; but so were a great majority of the electors in every other electorate. On the Charters Towers Gold Field a large number of men were employed in connection with the mines and the management of machinery; and in such towns as Charters Towers and Ravenswood many were employed in stores and various other ways, the same as in other centres of population. Such people were more or less permanent residents, as was the same class of people in Brisbane and Ipswich, and the Bill could not therefore affect them injuriously. There was a large class of men who were not wages men and who were not permanent residents on the goldfield he had the honour to represent, but before they could become the holders of areas for residence purposes they must, according to the Mines Regulations, be the possessors of miners' rights. Therefore, the Bill would not disfranchise them. The hon. gentleman referred the other night to those who were found now at one mining centre and again at another, but those were for the most part persons who held miners' rights; and he had not the least apprehension, so far as his district was concerned, that the Bill would injuriously affect any more than the most inconsiderable minority. As to the feeling of persons engaged on the goldfields, he might state that he was forced in the course of his candidature to pledge himself to give his assistance towards passing a measure even more stringent in its provisions than the one before the Committee. Whether rightly or wrongly, the people there had such an idea not only of the facility with which frauds could be perpetrated, but were perpetrated during the elections, that they insisted on him pledging himself to assist, if possible, in compelling a man to record his vote at one place only instead of at either of two. He could not see that any man's right would be intentionally infringed. Everybody knew that there could not be a law, however beneficial, that would not operate injuriously in some cases; but it was always held that they should legislate so as to do the greatest good to the greatest number, and he contended that it was far better that one honest man should be deprived of his undoubted right to exercise the franchise than that ten rogues should have facilities provided for perpetrating frauds.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. member represented a goldfield, and had just shown to him, who knew something about a goldfield, how little he (Mr. Rutledge) knew on the subject. The hon. member said that every man must hold a miner's right before he could take up a residence area. That was perfectly true, and that was all the hon. member knew. The wages men had no residence area; they simply pitched a tent in which they slept, and they boarded at boarding-houses.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Many of them are married men with families.

Mr. MACROSSAN: Does the hon. member know what I am talking about?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. member knew that before taking up a residence area a man must have a miner's right, but there were hundreds who had no residence area and no miners' rights; and those were the men on a goldfield that the Bill would affect. There was also a large class on the tinfields, and on the silverfields, who had no miners' rights. Fencers, dam-sinkers, and well-sinkers, on the Western Plains required no miners' rights, but they were equally nomadic; and the hon. gentleman had not answered that objection. Then, as to the promise he was compelled to make to those extreme individuals who gave him their support—he supposed the promise was reported in the newspapers at the time, and he should like to see it if the hon. gentleman was able to show him the report.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I will try and find it for you.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman held a good many meetings which were reported, and if such a promise had been exacted from him he hoped it would be forthcoming; but he doubted very much whether it could be found.

Mr. SMYTH said he could speak with as much authority on the question of gold-mining as any other hon. member, and he represented a greater number of miners than any member of the Committee. He had been also in New South Wales, where the population was of the description referred to by the hon. member for Townsville—that was, men working alluvial claims—and the difficulty there was got over very easily. There was no impersonation whatever. Such a thing was never heard of or even thought of. On the back of each miner's right a proper form was drawn up, and when the man went to the polling place he had to produce his miner's right, and after voting the right was marked by the returning officer, and could not be used again. Those who practised the most impersonation were single men who lived in boarding-houses. The married class were compelled to have miners' rights, in order to secure residence areas. Those people generally settled down, but it was the riff-raff who wandered about, and followed up every new rush, against whom the Bill was directed. A great many of them were not miners at all, but mere wanderers on the face of the earth. He represented a goldfield which had 1,700 names on the roll, and at the last election only four cases of impersonation took place, which spoke very well for the mining class. The reason why there were so few was because the population was settled. They did not belong to the wandering class of single men who were here to-day and away to-morrow—who might vote in one place one day, and then record their votes 200 miles away in two or three days' time, supposing the election to be held on different days. He hoped the hon. member for Townsville would consider the matter and let the Bill pass. He should like a clause to be inserted whereby the miner could vote anywhere, provided he could produce his miner's right, if the right had been held, say, three or six months previous to the election.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman had, no doubt, seen a good deal of experience on goldfields; but he had described a state of things which existed in New South Wales, and not in Queensland at all. If he knew anything about voting in Queensland, he would know that his remarks did not apply there, but to New South Wales, where the miners had special representatives.

Mr. SMYTH: We can provide the same in Queensland.

Mr. MACROSSAN said there were at one time three special representatives for the miners in New South Wales; but there never had been one in Queensland, where a man was often disfranchised because he was a miner. According to the hon. member, it was a crime to be a single man.

Mr. SMYTH: Oh! no.

Mr. MACROSSAN said he understood from the hon. member that personation was only practised by single men who lived in boarding-houses. He said they were loafers and wanderers on the face of the earth.

Mr. SMYTH: I did not say so.

Mr. MACROSSAN said that some time ago an hon. member got into terrible odium for calling those men "wandering vagabonds." Now the hon. member called them "wanderers upon the face of the earth." What was the difference?

Mr. SMYTH: I was speaking of the personators.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the very fact—if it was a fact—that there were only four cases of personation among the 1,700 electors of Gympie was a proof, if any was required, that personation was not such a common thing on the goldfields as the Premier seemed to think. In his (Mr. Macrossan's) opinion it was much more prevalent at Brisbane and Ipswich. If the hon. gentleman would bring in a Bill to apply to those places he would assist, but he should certainly resist a Bill applying only to large electorates in distant places with more than two polling places, no matter how many goldfields' representatives might be on the hon. gentleman's side.

Mr. HAMILTON said that, as just stated by the hon. member for Townsville, the hon. member (Mr. Smyth) had described a condition of things which, though it existed in New South Wales, had nothing whatever to do with the present Bill. The hon. member also said he represented a larger mining population than any other member of the House, which was nonsense. The hon. member also stated there were only four cases of personation at the last Gympie election. His (Mr. Hamilton's) committee were aware of twenty-five names, but did not think it advisable to proceed further against them. The hon. member also argued that it was a crime to be a single man, and that men who lived in boarding-houses were particularly immoral, and given to personation at elections. All that had nothing to do with the question before the Committee. He (Mr. Hamilton) believed that the Bill was a Bill for disfranchising country electorates, and especially the goldfield electorates in the North. It would tend not to prevent fraud, but to defraud the Northern miners of their votes. The hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) stated that he was requested by his constituents to take steps to preserve the purity of elections. It was no doubt necessary to take steps in that direction, and the first step should be to prevent the stuffing of rolls immediately before an election. He knew of cases where children of thirteen and fourteen had been allowed to vote. Clause 3, which insisted upon *bonâ fide* residence, would be particularly unfair upon the miners. He recollected seeing in one of the Herberton papers, just after the last Cook election, that a rush had taken place forty miles from California Gully to a place which might have been in a different electorate. Under such a clause every one of those men—and there might have been 200 or 300 of them—would have been disfranchised. According to the 53rd section of the existing Act it was considered right that miners should have greater privileges than other voters, owing to the

conditions under which they lived: they were not compelled to vote in one particular district, but could vote at any polling place on showing their miner's right. But not one-half the mining population had miners' rights. Men working in poor gullies were unable to purchase them. An employer might require half-a-dozen of his men to have miners' rights in order to comply with the provisions of tenure; but he might require 100 additional men who need not have those rights. Under the proposed clause the whole of those men would be disfranchised; and clause 7—a good one in a certain sense—did away with the system of voting by ballot.

Mr. FOOTE said he was not of opinion that there was more personation in Brisbane and Ipswich than in any other part of the colony. The only persons found guilty of personation at Ipswich, indeed, belonged to the party to which the hon. member who made the accusation (Mr. Macrossan) was allied. Those men were imported into Ipswich by that party for that especial purpose; they were brought thither from east, west, north, and south in order to influence the election. But for that party, he believed, there would have been no necessity for the Bill now before the Committee. Honest men were in favour of purity of elections, and registered their votes in a straightforward manner, and did not seek to obtain votes by clandestine means. They wanted the country to be represented, not misrepresented, and to defeat the efforts of unscrupulous men who did not care how they succeeded so long as they did succeed. He failed to see the objection to the clause that had been referred to. The hon. member (Mr. Macrossan) was not the only member acquainted with diggers, and it was well known that there was a large class of diggers whose characteristic was to be here to-day and elsewhere to-morrow, according as their interests led them. For instance, they would be working here to-day, and if they heard of a rush somewhere else they would be off at once. Now it was possible for a class of people of that sort to be on every roll in the colony, and they would be if care was not taken. They would then become very useful to certain parties on certain occasions. It was that state of affairs that allowed men to go about the country polluting and corrupting elections in every possible way, and wherever that was done the true voice of the people was not obtained. He had no hesitation in saying that all that was brought about by drink, corruption, and money. Every individual who desired the welfare of the colony of Queensland should set his face against corruption in the most straightforward manner. The difficulties the hon. member for Townsville talked about could be very easily met. Honest men did not want to personate. There were many respectable men who could not be corrupted, although it had been tried, but they valued their integrity and respectability too much to allow themselves to be corrupted. The difficulties could be easily met. Suppose that a lot of diggers belonged to a certain electorate and they decided to go to a certain other electorate. They could take their electoral rights with them, and if they presented them in another district before a court or clerk of petty sessions, he could cancel the one right and give them another for the district in which they were about to reside. An intimation to that effect could then be sent to the clerk of petty sessions of the district from which those men had come. Of course it was difficult to deal with the matter in a way to prevent fraud; but he thought himself that that short Bill to amend the present Act was very necessary. He certainly should like to see a Bill brought in, which could be very well done next session, to deal with the whole question, but in the meantime an election was not safe. Therefore it became an absolute necessity that some amendment should be made upon the present Act in order that when an election did take place they might get the voice of the people and not the voice of a corrupt mob.

Mr. STEVENSON said there was an old saying that "Truth will out," and he was glad to see that the hon. gentleman who had just sat down had been honest enough to let the cat out of the bag. He was the first member of his party who had done so. He had distinctly told the House that if it were not for the existence of his (Mr. Stevenson's) party there would be no necessity for the Bill. That was exactly the position of affairs, and the leader of the Government had simply brought forward that Bill as a slap to the people of the North, and to try to wipe out the Opposition party, so that he might do as he liked at the next election. It was a distinct strike at the North, and the Western country districts. That was exactly the position of affairs, and the hon. gentleman had been honest enough to admit it. It might have been accidental on the part of the hon. gentleman, but he gave him credit for being honest enough to believe what he said. He hoped, however, the attempt to make out that his (Mr. Stevenson's) side had done a great deal to corrupt the election would be frustrated. He would like to ask any sensible and reasonable man in the colony where the organisation had come from at the late elections? Had anything been done on the Opposition side? Not the slightest thing; but they knew that it had come from the other side of the House, and his hon. friend, the member for Bundanba, knew that better than any member of the House, and had done more in the way of sending agents about the country to do the personation business than any other man. The firm of Cribb and Foote had sent agents to all parts of the colony to work the elections. Did the hon. member not send agents to Stanthorpe to try and work the elections there?

Mr. FOOTE: And we did work it, too.

Mr. STEVENSON said that that was where the personation came from. His side did not know anything about personation. If he (Mr. Stevenson) knew how to work an election he would not take the trouble to do it, and if he could not get a seat in the House without personation he would go without one altogether. He would like to say something about the Bill itself. A great deal had been said in regard to the mining population, but there were members who would have a great deal to say in regard to other residents of the colony. Where would the carriers and timber-getters be if the Bill passed? He would like to ask his hon. friend the member for Clermont—who knew the position of things as well as he (Mr. Stevenson) did—he would ask him what would become of the carrying population of St. Lawrence, in the electorate of Normanby? Perhaps it would not apply so much now as it did at one time, but it would to a certain extent. The population of St. Lawrence was at one time entirely composed of carriers. They were seldom at St. Lawrence, and what would have become of them if they had not been allowed to vote at Clermont? Where could they have voted? They could not have exercised their right at all. If those men were going to be bound down by the Bill so that they could not vote at Clermont, they had better give up their system of election altogether. The hon. member for Townsville had said that the Bill would prevent 4,000 or 5,000 persons of the colony from voting, but he (Mr. Stevenson) said it would disfranchise 10,000, and for that reason he should give his hon. friend all the support and assistance he could in his opposition to the Bill.

Mr. NORTON said he thought the Premier had made a mistake in introducing the Bill. At the time the Ministry took office there was a general understanding then prevalent that the work of the session would be confined almost to passing the Estimates. If that impression was a wrong one, then he said that nobody but the Premier was to blame that it was not corrected. When the members of the Government were being sworn the Premier was outside the bar of the House, and the question was asked of the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Sheridan) as to what would be done this session. It was quite competent that the Premier could then have come to the bar and told the hon. member to inform the House what it would be called together for. He asked if it was fair, when some hon. members had gone away to the country under the impression that only the Estimates would be brought up for consideration—if it was fair to them and the House generally that those measures should be introduced without any notice whatever? That was how the thing stood. But, apart from that, he thought the hon. member would see that the Bill was a mistake, because it dealt with only a portion of the population—and not only that, but it prejudged a case that was now under consideration. It absolutely prejudged a case that had been brought before the Committee of Elections and Qualifications. It had been reported that a great deal of fraud took place with reference to certain elections; but because those reports had been made, was that a reason why that Bill should have been brought in before the committee had even sat at all? Was it a reason, because those rumours had been spread, that they should have a Bill introduced and passed before they knew what the committee had to say upon the subject? They might quite well believe the rumours which had been current with regard to the elections in other parts besides the outside districts. Did they not know the rumours which had been alluded to already with reference to what took place in many towns in the colony? And the hon. member for Bundanba, who spoke so readily on the subject, had far better have held his tongue. It was commonly reported that what was known as the Ipswich bunch of electorates were absolutely in the hands of Cribb and Foote. He did not say whether that was true or not; he simply dealt with it as a report. It was very undesirable that the matter should be brought forward at the present time. With regard to his own district, he was quite satisfied that if the Bill passed in its present form a number of electors in that district would be disfranchised. There were a number of small goldfields in Port Curtis, which were occupied by a varying number of men; sometimes there would be forty or fifty. Immediately over the border there was another field which a great many of those men went to when there was a fall of rain—that was Cania. There were two fields there within four miles of each other—Kroombit, in Port Curtis electorate, and Cania, in Mulgrave—and the population of both was migratory, because a man who worked on one at one time of the year might work on the other at another time. If the Bill passed, the electors in the district of Cania might go over to the Kroombit field; they could shift their tents in a couple of hours, and be in the Port Curtis district. They would be disfranchised from Mulgrave, and before they could be put on the Port Curtis roll they might be back in Mulgrave. He quite agreed with what had been said with regard to making the elections as fair as possible; but he did not see how the present Bill would meet the case, nor did he see how it would meet the case put before the committee. Although it might have the effect of stopping some corruption, it would lead to the disfranchisement of men who had every right to vote; and it had been pointed out already that those men who intended to be corrupt, and desired to be so, would find means of recording votes that they were not entitled to, whether the Bill was passed or not. He gave the hon. Premier every credit for being actuated by a proper motive in introducing the Bill, but he thought that the measure had not been properly considered, and he did not think the hon. gentleman himself realised what the effect of it would be until his hon. friend Mr. Macrossan told them what the actual result would be if it were passed into law.

The PREMIER said that, according to the hon. member, unfortunately he was always making mistakes. Whatever he did seemed, according to the hon. member, to be wrong. He was never allowed to have done right even by accident, although on the doctrine of chances one would suppose he might be right sometimes, even out of mere perversity. With regard to the argument that the Bill had never been thoroughly considered by the Government, how could the Government bring in such a measure at all without considering it? All their measures were fully considered. Not a single point of new light had been thrown upon the matter during the discussion by the Opposition, with the exception of the hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Burke; all the others who had objected had merely said, "This is not right; we should like to improve the Elections Act, but not in this way, especially at the present time." It appeared to him that the present time was one when it was desirable to amend the law. There was no use talking of rumours of corruption in Brisbane; if there had been rumours in Brisbane, they never got into the Press or were circulated where anybody could hear them. As to the rumours of personation and fraud in Ipswich, there were some. The hon. member for Bundanba spoke about them and explained how they came about. All those frauds that had been mentioned were struck at in the Bill, and that was where the shoe pinched. They were all distinctly struck at by the Bill. The greatest frauds during the past elections had been brought about by persons who no longer had the slightest connection with the district and were brought from a long distance and made to vote. That was notorious. It was no use their shutting their eyes to the fact. What he was saying had nothing to do with the Elections and Qualifications Committee. They were sworn judges irrespective of what was said in that House. He did not see that persons who had ceased to be residents of a district had any more right to vote there than persons who had ceased to have freehold there. If the clerks of petty sessions did their work infallibly the first part of the Bill would be unnecessary; but it was notorious that in many electorates in the colony there were hundreds of names on the roll of persons who had long since ceased to live in the district, and that some persons had turned up to vote in their names. When a man ceased to have the qualification, whether of a leaseholder or a resident, he had no right to vote, and no hardship would be inflicted upon him by saying that when his legal right had gone his technical right should go with it. Another argument used by the hon. gentleman who had just sat down was that there were some people in his district who sometimes resided in one district and sometimes in another. The hon. gentleman's argument went to show that such men had a right to vote in both. He thought he had a right to vote in neither. Their system was to give a man a right to vote in the district in which he lived, but not in two or three.

Of course, difficulties arose and must arise under that system when the men ceased to have a qualification. He would lose his vote for six months, but that was the extent of the hardship which had been pointed out. Was that a great hardship? They had been speaking against the notorious frauds they wanted to strike at. Could the two things be weighed together in the balance for one moment? A few persons would occasionally be disfranchised by their own act for a period of six or eight months. That was the hard case, as against a certain good. He was perfectly aware that the Bill would disfranchise hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of those men alluded to by the hon. member for Townsville; but they had already lost their legal right, and now they would lose their technical right to vote. The other part of the Bill had been strangely misunderstood. Hon. members argued as if the Bill would disfranchise all electors on the goldfields who had not miners' rights. It would do nothing of the kind. Under the existing law a man may be required to vote in the district attached to his polling place, though it was a provision that could not be put in force everywhere. What was proposed now was that the man who could identify himself by a written document might vote anywhere. That was much more liberal than the old provision. After what had been said he was perfectly willing to extend the privilege to the whole of those holding miners' rights, mining licenses, carriers' licenses, or timber licenses. That would cover nearly every case, and the hardship would be confined only to those of an extremely nomadic character. If they wished to move from one place to another they could get a residence qualification by simply making application; the matter was in their own hands. The number affected by a provision of that kind, even if it was strictly enforced, would probably be not more than 200 or 300 in the whole colony; while the number of persons affected who had no right to vote would, no doubt, be thousands.

Mr. NORTON said he was sorry he always misunderstood the hon. gentleman. He had given the hon. gentleman credit for having introduced the Bill from proper motives. He was now obliged to withdraw that assumption. According to what the hon. gentleman had said, he introduced the Bill with improper motives; at all events, he presumed that was the only logical deduction from the hon. gentleman's remarks. He did not think the hon. gentleman's arguments had quite met his (Mr. Norton's) case. He had now offered to include among those who would vote under the Bill a large number of persons referred to by the hon. member for Kennedy. He thought that fact was a sufficient answer to the statement that the Bill had received proper consideration at the hon. gentleman's hands.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that according to the Premier the Bill had been introduced on account of notorious frauds perpetrated at the late general election; but whoever heard of a Bill based on mere report of rumour of frauds supposed to have been perpetrated? If there were those supposed notorious frauds, then let the House legislate to prevent a recurrence of such frauds; but the present action was prejudging a case that had to be tried. To say that notorious frauds had been perpetrated in an election where two of the principal supporters of the Premier desired to succeed gentlemen who now sat on the Opposition side was a most improper statement to come from the Premier, and on his own showing ought never to have been made. The hon. gentleman told them that the Bill was introduced because of notorious frauds. The only notorious frauds that he (Mr. Morehead) had heard of were in the Ipswich district, and some of the electorates near there. The Bill was evidently introduced for the purpose of influencing the Elections and Qualifications Committee, so that they might unseat certain members sitting on the Opposition side; and therefore he thought it was the duty of hon. members on that side to see that it did not pass into law. If that was the way the minority were going to be worked by the majority, then God help them; he hoped the Opposition would be strong enough to prevent such a thing. The Bill, he believed, was introduced for a specific purpose, and for that purpose only. It was not to reform the law, but to influence the Elections and Qualifications Committee in reference to the Cook election. He had not the least doubt of it. The Premier had told them it was to defeat notorious frauds at elections. He (Mr. Morehead) should do what he could to prevent the Elections and Qualifications Committee from looking on it as an Act.

Mr. KELLETT said he was sorry to hear the last remark of the leader of the Opposition. Unless it was meant as an insult to the members of the Elections and Qualifications Committee, he did not know what object there was in saying it. The hon. member's arguments were all bad. He said that the frauds spoken of were supposititous frauds, but it was well known that frauds were committed in most of the electorates in the southern part of the colony. In the Stanley electorate, when the returning officer examined the papers he found 103 double votes. There were 53 who voted twice, 12 who voted three times, 8 who voted four times, and one man who voted five times.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Not diggers.

Mr. KELLETT said they were railway navvies—gangs of navvies who were brought from a certain railway line into the Stanley district. Those were facts. A great deal of trouble was taken to stop that sort of thing, and as many people as possible were prosecuted; but unfortunately some of the cases were lost through technical points, and there were not so many people punished as there ought to have been. But it was found necessary to do something to stop such practices; because, for instance, if the Stanley election had been a close one it might have given further trouble; but luckily the polling was nearly two to one, and so it was definitely decided. The Carnarvon election had been alluded to, and they knew what had been done there. There was more illegality there than in Stanley, but the people had heard of frauds and they were on the lookout in time. In Stanthorpe every precaution was taken, and had not every precaution been taken the result of the elections would have been the other way. There was not the slightest doubt about that. He knew himself that overseers of a railway contractor—one especially was nearly three weeks in Stanthorpe with the exception of two or three days he was away, when he returned each time with a lot of men who were not known in the district, who had not a vote in it, and were perfect strangers there. That man was for nearly three weeks in Stanthorpe; and on the day of the election, not only the railway overseer but the engineer from the same line—the Brisbane Valley Railway—was brought up in a special train with a number of men who were unknown in the district. Those were the reasons which made it imperative that a Bill of that kind should be brought in and passed, even in one short session. He was as anxious as anyone to be out of the House during the hot weather, but he was prepared to sit there for a month or two longer to see a Bill of the kind put through,

The only thing he objected to in it was that it was not stringent enough. If he could alter it he would make it more stringent. He would certainly alter the first portion of the 6th clause. It said, "It shall be lawful for the Governor in Council, by proclamation, to order and declare that at any election for any electoral district all electors, &c." That was leaving the application of the clause to the Governor in Council, and they all knew what that meant. He did not care which party was in power at the time, he did not care to see them have the power which the 6th clause gave them. It was said that several nomadic individuals—men who were continually travelling about the colony, and did not remain six months in one place—would be disfranchised by the Bill; but to his mind it would be a very little matter if a few of them lost their votes, as the good the Bill would do in the other direction would more than counteract what loss might be sustained by a few of those men losing their votes.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that the leader of the Opposition had said just now that he objected to the measure at that stage because it was based upon a rumour, and that the practices which it was admitted were intended to be guarded against by the Bill had not been proved to have actually taken place.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Premier said so himself.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said it was not necessary to prove a thing that both sides consented to or admitted as a fact. The hon. gentleman himself admitted that those things had taken place, for in speaking on the occasion of the second reading of the Bill he said this:—

"I think that many of the proceedings which took place at the last general election have shown every member of this House and every thinking man outside of it that great amendment is required in the present Electoral Act. Though, however, I shall not in any way oppose the second reading of the Bill before us, I think it would have been very much better if, instead of amending one portion of the Act requiring amendment, the hon. member had gone in for a much larger measure of reform than is contained in the Bill now before us."

He further went on to say:—

"To my mind, even as it is now, when it gets into committee it will require alteration, if it is to effect the object which the other side professes to wish to see attained, and which my side certainly desire—that is, to prevent personation, which, I believe, took place to a lamentably large extent during the late elections."

Mr. MOREHEAD: So it did, at Ipswich.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said it was plain that the hon. gentleman admitted what had been alleged, and there was no occasion to prove it for he said himself that there was a lamentable amount of corruption at the last elections. Why the hon. member should therefore say that the Bill was based on rumour he could not understand. There was a consensus of opinion that such things had occurred, and it did not require any legal proof of them to justify the Bill under the circumstances.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he did not withdraw, or retract, or alter a single word he said the other night. The state of things complained of was proved to exist by the committal of a good many persons to gaol in the southern portions of the colony. He was not prepared, however, that evening to hear the Premier absolutely earmark the reason for the Bill, which was because of irregularities which took place in the northern portion of the colony. Nor was he prepared to support the Bill after hearing the arguments of the hon. member for Townsville, whom he held to be by far the best authority in the House on the subject of miners. That hon. member had, to his mind, conclusively proved that the effect of the passing of the Bill would be to disfranchise a large number of men who now had a right to vote. He had not been prepared either to hear the hon. member for Stanley ask what it mattered if a few nomads were disfranchised. He held, himself, that the roving population of the colony were just as good colonists as the electors of Stanley, and they certainly sent better men to the House than the hon. member.

The PREMIER said he did not remember saying anything about the northern part of the colony, and no one on his side of the Committee, he thought, heard him say anything of the kind. It was purely imagination. He certainly referred to two or three notorious cases which had occurred in the colony, but he did not remember referring to any constituency in particular, and was sure he had done nothing of the kind.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. Premier had followed soon after the hon. member for Bundanba, who distinctly stated that the Bill was introduced to meet personation in connection with the election of members on the Opposition side of the House. The hon. gentleman heard that from his supporter, and had not denied it. The hon. gentleman did not say distinctly the northern part of the colony, but he repeated almost the same words as the hon. member for Bundanba. He also stated that the Bill was introduced for the purpose of checking frauds, and added that that was where the shoe pinched—alluding to the Opposition side of the House. He denied that. He was himself returned to the House by a larger majority than any hon. member but the hon. gentleman himself. He had been returned by a majority at almost every polling place in his electorate, and there was certainly no necessity for him to resort to such practices. The shoe, therefore, did not pinch him, and he was as much opposed to the Bill as any hon. member on his side of the Committee. The hon. gentleman stated that the provisions they were repealing were so cumbrous that they were never put into force. Why did the hon. gentleman attempt to make them more cumbrous?

The PREMIER: These are too simple.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. member was making them more cumbrous than ever. Was the Bill another sham—pretending to purify elections when he knew that the portion he was pretending to purify was too cumbrous to put into operation? The best thing the hon. member could do was to withdraw the Bill. He did not know whether the hon. member for Stanley meant all he said about nomads. If he did he could tell him that every one of those nomads was as good a citizen as the hon. member himself, and was doing as much to redound to the credit of the colony as the hon. member did. He thought it very unbecoming in the hon. member to make so light of disfranchising any people, whether nomads or the permanent residents of any portion of the colony. The hon. member surely knew that the colony had been built up by nomads, and not by dwellers in towns like himself. It was not by buying and selling that the colony was made, but by producing, and the nomads were producers; and the hon. member had no right to use such words as he had used concerning them.

Mr. KELLETT said that both the leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Townsville were putting words into his mouth which he did not say at all. He said he did not think it would be of much moment if a few nomads, who travelled from one portion of the colony to another, were unrepresented. He said there were only a few who would lose their votes by their nomadic character. He did

not say anything against men on the goldfields, or against any of the producers of the colony. The hon. member for Townsville and the leader of the Opposition wanted to make out that he said "all the nomads," and that he put down all diggers as nomads. He respected the diggers of the colony as much as any class in the community, and never alluded to them in any such way.

Mr. HAMILTON said he protested against the gross and unprovoked insult that had been offered by the Premier to hon. members on that side of the House. The hon. gentleman said that all the frauds that had been committed during the recent elections were struck at by the Bill, and that was where the shoe pinched. Now, as the members of the Opposition were the only ones who opposed the Bill, they must be the persons against whom his remarks were directed. No other construction could possibly be put upon his remarks, and he, for one, resented such observations coming from the Premier of the colony. With regard to the residence clause, the hon. gentleman actually recognised the fact that it virtually disfranchised a large section of the community; but stated that it must be passed because clerks of petty sessions did not do their duty, by striking names off the roll. But why did they not make the clerks of petty sessions do their duty? Were the miners of the colony to be disfranchised because those officers did not do their duty? If the present occupants of the office did not do their duty let them get those who would. He was glad to see that the Premier was willing to extend the concession with regard to voting, not only to persons holding miners' rights, but also to holders of timber licenses and mineral licenses. He thought every miner should be allowed to vote in any part of the district in which he resided; and he could not see why a poor miner, working perhaps in a gully, who had not sufficient money to enable him to purchase a miner's right, should not be entitled to the same privilege as the more fortunate miner. If the privilege was one to which a miner was entitled, he should be allowed to exercise it without payment. Again, the objection had not been met, that according to this clause the principle of voting by ballot would be subverted, because there might be many instances where 400 or 500 miners might go from one place to another, and according to this Bill they, if voting outside their electoral district, had to state for whom they were voting.

Mr. ARCHER denied *in toto* that there was any necessity for the passing of the Bill. It was perfectly evident from the tone of the debate that had taken place that it would not be passed for a long time; that it would be resisted, and that it would waste a great deal of time. They had heard a great deal about personation in certain electorates, and also about roll-stuffing, which was one of the great evils the Bill did not touch at all. The principal electorates he had heard mentioned in connection with those evils were those of Brisbane and those surrounding Ipswich, and particularly the one referred to by the hon. member for Stanley. But the Bill now under consideration would not apply to such electorates as Brisbane and Ipswich; and there was this to be said: that it was not only double voting but roll-stuffing that was the great evil; and he had heard that there were persons employed in Brisbane for the advantage of the other side of the House who made it their business to stuff the rolls.

Mr. PERKINS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ARCHER: It might be false; and of course he could not say if it was true, but at any rate that rumour ought to be taken into as much consideration as the rumour about double voting in other electorates. He was as anxious as anyone to secure the purity of elections, but he denied that it could be done by this patchwork legislation. He denied that the present was the proper time to introduce such a measure. They were brought together simply for the purpose of passing the Estimates and allowing the Government to mature their measures; and although there might be some object in passing Bills to meet peculiar cases, yet for the introduction of a measure affecting the whole of the electorates of the colony it was a most unfitting time, and it was done in a most unfitting manner. The question ought to be relegated to the coming session, when the whole Act could be dealt with and improved as far as possible. The advice given to the Premier to withdraw the Bill and bring it in at the proper time was really sincere, and he did not think the hon. gentleman could justify himself in keeping hon. members in the House to pass measures of such a patchwork description, when they would be prepared to discuss the question fairly and fully at the proper time.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he was not present when the Bill passed the second reading, but he had taken the liberty of reading some of the speeches of the leaders on the other side of the House, and he thought both sides were very unanimous in the opinion that the Electoral Act sadly wanted amending. But he now found that a new departure had taken place with regard to the passing of the Bill through committee. The leaders on the other side now appeared to think that no amendment was necessary, and they denied that the shoe pinched on their side of the House. But if the shoe did not pinch on their side, why were they so very anxious to keep things as they were? The Bill would affect one side of the House just as much as it would the other at a general election. It had been said that the Bill had been brought in simply because some rumours had been afloat in certain districts; but there were more than rumours—there were stern facts—but those facts did not all take place at the last general election. They had been working for many years past at general elections. It was because of the corruption in past elections that the Ipswich people took means during the last general election to defeat that corruption. Political corruption was found out at Ipswich because precautions were taken to find it out, and no doubt similar disclosures would follow similar precautions in other places. Many hon. members of the Opposition would not be sitting there now but for corruption. What about those special trains that were sent hither and thither on polling days during the last election? Hundreds of men were taken from Ipswich to vote at Stanthorpe and the Darling Downs. He knew one case of four brothers whose names were down on four or five different rolls, and they were always ready to do their duty at the bidding of hon. gentlemen on the other side. Such things would continue until the existing Act was amended. He did not contend that hon. members on the Ministerial side were all immaculate, but the cases of political corruption that had taken place in connection with them were very few indeed. That was shown by the fact that they were not afraid to pass the Bill now under consideration. An hon. member had spoken about the "Ipswich bunch." He did not know why they should be called the "Ipswich bunch" any more than another set of members should be called the "Northern bunch." Now, however, they all sat on the same side of the House, as they would have done five years ago but for corruption.

At the late elections the Ipswich people were determined to take every precaution to prevent personation, and they had managed to defeat nearly every attempt at double voting, and to show the House and the colony that by purity of voting they could always defeat the machinations of evil that emanated from the other side. The fact of the Opposition obstructing the Bill showed that the shoe pinched. Thieves did not want any legislation that would prevent them from thieving; and men whose craft was in danger were always opposed to reforms that would sweep it away.

Mr. CHUBB said that, although when the second reading of the Bill was moved he spoke in favour of it, and was not going back from his word, yet it was too much to expect that when insinuations were made that the Bill was introduced in consequence of malpractices committed by the Opposition—to expect that Opposition to help to pass the Bill. As long as those insinuations or charges were not withdrawn, he should oppose the Bill tooth and nail. He himself was not conscious of any misdeeds in the direction indicated; but his party were charged with them, and they were asked to assist in passing a Bill to prevent them as alleged from committing those misdeeds in the future. No insinuations of the kind were made on the second reading, and the Opposition met the Premier in a fair spirit, some of them approving of the principle of the Bill and expressing their intention to support it. Since the second reading time had been allowed for reflection, and it was unfair to say that, because hon. members of the Opposition chose to criticise the details of the measure, therefore they were obstructing it for an improper purpose. After listening attentively to the speeches that had been made he was of opinion that the new evils which the Bill would create would be greater than those which it was intended to prevent. The question of the goldfields electorates was evidently a much larger one than it was considered to be when the Bill was introduced, for the Premier had himself expressed his willingness to go considerably further, and to make the 9th clause apply to persons pursuing other avocations than mining. It almost seemed as if they would have to go back again to the old system of voters' rights. It was hardly fair to make a certain class of colonists pay 10s. to enable them to record their votes. At the same time, seeing the evils that had occurred, he intended to support the clause; but so long as hon. members on the other side declined to withdraw the charge made against the Opposition he would oppose the Bill as a matter of course.

Mr. JORDAN said it was worse than a waste of time for hon. members on either side of the Committee to accuse the other of corrupt practices. Although the Premier had said that the shoe appeared to pinch, he (Mr. Jordan) did not attach much importance to the remark, nor, he thought, did the Premier himself. He contended that the hon. member for Townsville had been somewhat inconsistent in obstructing the measure now, after the leader of the Opposition had stated the other day that the Opposition would help the Government to pass it through the House. In discussing the second reading of the Bill the hon. member, the leader of the Opposition, had stated distinctly the other day that his side of the House would assist the Government, whereas the hon. member for Townsville now said that he would obstruct the Bill and oppose every clause in it. The Premier had been urged to withdraw the Bill, although the other day both sides of the House concurred in saying that it was a measure which recent evidence had demanded—not only justified, but demanded—and they received an assurance of support from the other side. He went a part of the way with the hon. member for Townsville in his sympathy with the class of people whom he said would be disfranchised by the passing of the Bill. He (Mr. Jordan) did not think those persons would be disfranchised. For his own part he had a very strong idea that the privilege was not a trust, but that every Englishman should possess the franchise as an inviolable right. He would advocate that every person who had attained the age of manhood should have the right to vote, and have a voice in returning to the Legislature those who made the laws by which he was governed. But they could not carry out those theories in practice to their ultimate issue. It was the six months' qualification which disfranchised a considerable number of persons. During the last six months they had been having a very large accession to their population by a great number of persons who had come from the home country. Those men were in a sense disfranchised—that was, they could not exercise the right of free men until they had resided six months in the colony. The hon. member for Townsville opposed the Bill on the ground that a number of persons who had no miner's right, and who were engaged in a variety of occupations, would be disfranchised because they were moving about, and because of the six months' residence they would not be entitled to vote. If they in effect disfranchised a number of persons by taking away from them the right to vote by the six months' qualification, why should they not proceed to legislate as the Premier had proposed, in the direction of carrying out the principle of the principal Act—the principle of residence? Persons who left a district disqualified themselves, and if they did not come back again it was their own lookout. That they could not help. He held that they did not disfranchise persons who were nomadic—who went about from place to place because they were obliged to do so. They thought it wise to maintain the six months' qualification which by the Act enabled a man to vote. That was all. As to talking about disfranchisement, it was ridiculous. Then again, if those diggers who had been mentioned valued the power of voting, it was easy enough for them to do so by taking out a miner's right. It only cost 10s., and if they valued their privileges as free men it was easy enough to qualify themselves. He hoped that the concessions which the Premier had made would meet the views which had been enunciated by gentlemen on the other side of the Committee; and he was glad to hear the hon. member for Bowen state that he was disposed to meet the views of his side, as they had been modified by the hon. the Premier. He felt certain that every member on his (Mr. Jordan's) side was just as determined as the hon. member for Stanley that the Bill should pass.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he did not know that the hon. member, who occupied such a very curious position on the other side of the Committee, had any right to tell members on the other side that they were not reasonable beings because they did not agree with him. He (Mr. Morehead) could understand any number of reasonable beings not agreeing with the hon. member. Now the hon. member had said that on the second reading of the Bill he (Mr. Morehead) had said that he would give it his support. He said nothing of the sort. What he did say was this:—

"The measure before us is manifestly incomplete. To my mind, even as it is now, when it gets into committee it will require alteration if it is to effect the object which the other side professes to wish to see attained, and which my side certainly desire—that is, to prevent personation."

He now repeated every word of that. Hon. gentlemen opposite had shown that it was not with the intention of preventing personation or frauds generally that the Bill had been brought in, but that it was with the intention of preventing frauds committed on the Opposition side exclusively. It was a measure of condemnation. Did the hon. the Premier think that they would submit to such a charge at his hands or that of any other hon. member? What right had the Premier to come down there and tell them that the Bill was to be a condemnation of their action—not a measure of reform—not for the purpose of doing good, but that a record should be placed on the statute-book that they had behaved dishonestly to the colony at the late general election. It was monstrous that any hon. members could be got to vote for such a measure, and it was owing to the Premier himself the debate that had taken place. The hon. gentleman must withdraw a great deal before they would assist him in passing the Bill. He hoped that the hon. member for Bowen would not assist in passing a measure which was to disfranchise a large section of their fellow-colonists. It had been almost said by hon. members on the other side that it was a crime to be a resident of any other district than East and West Moreton, and Ipswich, and the thickly populated districts around Brisbane; and that a man, if he did happen to be disfranchised, could remedy that by taking out a miner's right. The hon. member for South Brisbane said, "There is no grievance—cannot a man get a miner's right for 10s.?" But was the hon. member prepared to say that every elector should pay 10s. for his vote? What had the digger done that he should be told that if he wanted a vote he must pay 10s. for it? That was to say, that to enable him to obtain the privilege of voting he was to pay for it while every other elector in the colony got the same right for nothing. For his part he was much more inclined to act the other way, and remove from the digger the disability that he was at present under, and put him on the same footing as other electors by not compelling him to have a miner's right. As he said before, the whole debate had been brought to its present exasperated state by the action of the Premier, who had stated that "the shoe pinched" because the Bill had been brought in. If it were passed, would it prevent the repetition of those disgraceful frauds which it was said took place on the part of members of the Opposition?

The PREMIER said he was sorry to hear that the debate was in an exasperated condition, and should be still more sorry if he had caused such a feeling. He said, when speaking some days ago, that the attention of the Government had been called to the frauds perpetrated during the last elections, and that was why the Bill had been brought in. He repeated the statement in moving the second reading. He did not intend to exasperate anybody, and should be sorry to accuse any member of the Opposition of having connived at corrupt practices. Such a thing had never struck him. It was of no use shutting their eyes and saying they could not see that there had been corrupt practices; but that was different to accusing members on the other side of the House. He had accepted the assurance of hon. gentlemen opposite that they were as anxious as members on his side of the Committee to put an end to fraud. He was rather surprised to see the change that had somehow taken place in the spirit of hon. members opposite. He looked forward to getting assistance from the hon. member at the head of the Opposition, and thought he had a right to do so; also that of two or three other members on that side who volunteered their assistance to the passage of the Bill. He hoped the debate would not be in an exasperated condition any longer; there was no reason for it.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. Premier had said he was sorry that the debate was in an exasperated condition. It was not long since the gentleman got up in an exasperated style and said that anything that he did hon. members of the Opposition would say was wrong, and even if that side said he was right he would believe himself to be wrong. What style of debate was that, but to exasperate the other side of the Committee? Were they not to be allowed to criticise the hon. gentleman? Was he raised so much above the common herd by being made Premier, that nobody had any right to criticise his Bills and actions? The hon. gentleman also seemed to be surprised at the debate being in an exasperated condition. Who exasperated it? The hon. member for Bundanba had begun, and was followed by the hon. Premier himself. The hon. member for Bundanba told them plainly that the Bill was introduced for the purpose of dealing with the frauds committed by the Opposition side of the House; and he was followed by the Premier, who said the Bill was introduced to deal with frauds, and that that was where the shoe pinched. Another hon. member got up and stated, not very distinctly, that the frauds were committed on the other side, and claimed purity of election for his own side, and said that they spent a good deal of money during the elections. The Bill was supposed to be introduced to prevent personation, and as far as personation was concerned he was prepared to prevent it; but when he (Mr. Macrossan) pointed out that in preventing personation the Bill was disfranchising many people, he objected to it. If personation was to be prevented, it should be done without disfranchising. If they had to go in for purity of elections, which seemed to be called for by both sides of the Committee, they must begin at the fountain-head—at the rolls. The present Bill did not deal with the rolls. They must stop the practice of stuffing the rolls: that was where the fraud came in. A few personations were nothing to the number of dead men upon the rolls—men who never had any existence being put upon the rolls. The Bill did not deal with that, or any frauds which were committed in Brisbane or Ipswich. He did not think the hon. gentleman would deny that frauds were commited there as well as elsewhere. So far as rumours were concerned, he had heard for the last eighteen months that the Brisbane rolls had been perfectly stuffed by a gentleman acting for the other side. Why could not the hon. gentleman bring in a Bill to deal with that question? That was the real question at issue. It was not a question of stopping a few miserable, ignorant personators, but of dealing with educated roll-stuffers who were on the Commission of the Peace. It was no use the hon. member for Ipswich denying the fraud and corruption. Did they not know that that had been the very mother of frauds and corruption in regard to elections in that part of the colony?

Mr. FOOTE: No, no!

Mr. MACROSSAN: Perhaps it might be perfectly pure at present. He did not allude to the members who were in the House. Present company was always excepted.

Mr. FOOTE: What about Townsville?

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. member who got up to talk about frauds and corruptions was acquainted with one of the late members for that district, who made fraud and corruption and personation a profession, and carried it so far that he said he could go to any district and return any member he chose. It was useless

denying that, and they must have a Bill to deal with those frauds and corruptions, and not with only rumoured frauds. If the hon. gentleman brought in a Bill to deal with the whole question, which would strike at dwellers in towns as well as dwellers in the country—a Bill preventing roll-stuffing in the first instance—he would have his hearty support, and the hearty support of every member on the Opposition side of the Committee. He would never get that support to a one-sided Bill which, whilst pretending to deal with personation, disfranchised numbers of constituents of members on his side of the Committee, under the rumour that fraud had been perpetrated during the election.

The PREMIER said he hoped hon. members would not allow themselves to be exasperated by the hon. member who had just sat down, as his speech was not a contribution to the amenity of the debate. The hon. member did not address himself to the Bill, but to some other Bill. He had called the attention of the Committee to the fact that during the last election, in various parts of the colony, persons who had ceased to be residents had voted, and the Bill was brought in to put a stop to that. They could not do everything at once. There was an evil manifested at the last election, and the Bill was brought in to deal with it. Was the fact disputed that at the last elections many persons voted in electorates they had long ceased to be residents in? It could not be disputed. This part of the Bill was extremely simple, and dealt with that subject only.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that, before they proceeded any further, he thought they ought to have a distinct disclaimer from the leader of the Government of a statement made by him, and confirmed by some of his followers, that the Bill was introduced in consequence of corrupt practices at the late election, and that, having special reference to some members on the Opposition side, that was where the shoe pinched.

The PREMIER said he had endeavoured throughout to consider the Bill not as a personal matter, but as one in which they were all equally interested on both sides of the Committee. He of course could not withdraw the statement that the Bill was introduced in consequence of corrupt practices during the late election; but he could say that no particular member of either side of the House was thought of when he made that statement. It was not intended as a measure of vengeance against hon. members on the opposite side of the House. The hon. member for Townsville took exception to the expression "the shoe pinches." He did not remember in what connection he had said that, but it must have been in the debate when he spoke in reply to some hon. member who attacked him.

Mr. MACROSSAN: It was said deliberately. After saying the Bill was introduced to prevent fraud, you added, "That is where the shoe pinches.

The PREMIER said he knew the hon. member for Townsville was disposed to be angry, but he hoped his example would not be followed. It was a matter which certainly ought to be discussed without angry feeling on either side. All were equally interested in securing the purity of elections. It might press hard on one party at one time and on another party at some other time.

Mr. JORDAN said the hon. leader of the Opposition had, he thought, referred to him as one of the members on the Government side of the House who stated that the Bill was introduced to prevent illegal practices such as took place at the election of some members of the Opposition. He distinctly denied having said anything of the kind, but he had said that it was a waste of time to expect members of that side to admit that such practices had occurred.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was quite prepared to accept the disclaimer of the leader of the Government. With regard to the 2nd clause, if, as he understood from the hon. Premier, a large number of those who would be disfranchised as it stood at present, would be enfranchised by amending clause 9, he was prepared to let clause 2 go, always preserving to himself the right to deal with the matter when being dealt with in clause 9, as they did not think it was sufficiently dealt with by the Premier.

The PREMIER said that in any case the 56th section of the principal Act required amendment, because it only applied to persons whose qualification was on a goldfield. It was only limited in its application, and it ought also to apply to persons on proclaimed mineral fields as well as goldfields.

Mr. PALMER said that the hon. Premier had intimated that he expected assistance and amendments from the Opposition in carrying the Bill, and in that spirit he (Mr. Palmer) had approached the subject. He thought that was the spirit in which he as a new member had a right to approach it. It seemed to be a foregone conclusion that the Bill was to go through, but so far as his district was concerned he intended to show how each clause would affect the electors of it. There were four or five members representing outside districts absent, and as they were representing districts somewhat similar to his, and were not present to defend their own cause, he would deal with the Bill as affecting his electorate, and it would probably affect theirs in the same way. The Premier had acknowledged that the same measure would not affect all parts of the colony alike. A Bill suited to a town constituency would be very wide of the mark when applied to a large pastoral district or to a mining centre. Before going further he desired to protest against what had been said by the hon. member for Stanley that evening about the nomads in the western parts of Queensland. The hon. member had been very unjust in his remarks respecting an independent and honest class of people. It was no use the hon. member denying what he had said, because he added that he would like to make the Bill even more stringent upon them, and it did not even matter if they were prevented from voting. He would like to ask where Queensland would be to-day if it had not been for those nomads. They had carried settlement during his time from Canoona, beyond the borders of Queensland, into South Australian territory. Nomads had done that work—the rough, hard work of Queensland—and they had no right to be deprived of their vote. They were good citizens of Queensland, and simply because they were engaged in rambling occupations was no reason why they should be deprived of their votes and their rights as citizens. Clause 3, which said that no one had a right to vote who was on the roll unless he was resident in the district, would deal hardly with the electorate in which he was most concerned. He should prefer that a voter's name might be allowed to remain on the roll for six months after he left a district. His occupation might take him out of the district in which he was qualified to vote, for in many cases the electorates were simply divided by a creek or ridge, and a man might be employed for three months just across the creek or ridge in bullock-driving, or shepherding, or fencing, and when he returned he could then say he had only been absent for three months. His name should be left on the roll for six months after he left the district, and it would take quite six months for the voter to get his name on a fresh roll if it had to pass

two revision courts. As the clauses came on he would refer to the way in which they would affect the people in his district. One part of the measure did not appear to him to be very fair. It referred always to voters; it should have referred also in some way to candidates themselves. His election was, as far as he was concerned, carried out all right, but he thought that if the candidates were sometimes referred to it would be desirable.

Mr. JESSOP said they had heard a good deal about corruption, personation, nomads, and all that sort of thing, but so far as he could see the Bill only applied to electorates where, if they had more than two or three polling places, they were likely to disfranchise a large number of electors, and for that reason he objected to it. As to nomads, he would like to know where the colony would be now if it had not been for those people. How would the people of Brisbane have developed the Western districts of the colony? A large number of people in those districts would be disfranchised by the Bill—bullock-drivers, stockmen, well-sinkers, shepherds, and others. A shepherd, for instance, might be engaged on one station for twelve months, and have his name put on the roll; at the end of that time he might engage with another squatter perhaps fifty or sixty miles away, but still in the same electorate, and it would be very hard indeed that he should be obliged to go back to the polling district for which his name was on the roll to vote. It would also be very hard on his employer and everyone connected with the matter, and very expensive. Then, supposing he offered to vote and was asked the questions proposed, the result would be that he would have to vote openly, and that would be doing away with the ballot-box altogether. He (Mr. Jessop) contended that such a proceeding would be an infringement of the rights of all true colonists, and he should object to it. Further, he believed that the Bill had been brought in to assist the Government in connection with the work of the Elections and Qualifications Committee; in fact, he was afraid those matters were already prejudged, because almost everybody outside was talking about who was going to be put out of the House and who was not—who would win the case and who would not. He therefore believed that the Bill was brought forward with the view of assisting the Government at the next election, when the Elections Committee threw the present members out, if they did so; and that he held was wrong. If the Premier had let the matter rest until the regular session, and then brought in a Bill to repeal the present Act and pass a new measure dealing with the whole subject, he should have been only too glad to assist him. He was as strongly opposed to personation as any members of that House—perhaps more strongly than some—and he would be willing to assist in any measure that would prevent it; and he thought nothing would assist to that end so much as allowing each voter to have a voter's right.

The PREMIER said, while he was anxious that the Bill should be passed, he was quite prepared to give effect to any reasonable objection that might be made to its provisions. The object of discussing a Bill in committee was to improve it, and he was willing to admit that any measure might be improved by discussion. What he now rose to suggest was that the objection with regard to disfranchising the persons referred to would be met by making the 3rd clause read in this way :—

"No person, whose name is entered on the roll of electors for any electoral district in respect of the qualification of residence, shall be entitled to vote in respect of that qualification at any election for such district unless at some time within six months before such election he has been actually and *bonâ fide* resident in the district."

That would give a man who had ceased to reside in a district six months before he would be deprived of his vote. He made the suggestion with the view of meeting some cases of hardship—he did not think there were many—that had been pointed out.

Clause 2 put and passed.

On clause 3—"Residence qualification must continue to time of election"—

Mr. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman had made a concession which met, to a certain extent, the objection to the residence qualification, but it did not meet the case entirely. He was sure the hon. gentleman would agree with him when he pointed out how it would operate. A man who was on the roll for any district under the residence qualification, and left that district, must be six months in the district to which he went before he could be put on the roll—or it might be nine months. If the hon. gentleman was willing that no one entitled to vote should be disfranchised, and at the same time desired to prevent personation, he must go a little further than he had done. If he would go this far it would meet the case: That any person should have a right to vote under the residence qualification in any district if he was on the roll for another district under the residence qualification. Then he could vote only once in the district, and at the end of six months his name on the roll of the district which he had left would of course be struck off. Did the hon. gentleman understand him?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. MACROSSAN: He should like every man who had a right to vote to be allowed to vote. Although it was not part of their constitutional law, still he agreed entirely with the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Jordan) that every man had an inalienable right to vote. That was not the British law, under which a man had only a statutory right to vote, but he held that every man had an inalienable right to vote. They provided that a man to be entitled to vote must be six months in the district, which meant, he presumed, six months in the colony; but, for the sake of convenience, the colony was divided into electorates, and he must be in some electoral district. He (Mr. Macrossan) held that, a man having once fulfilled the condition of residence in the country for six months, he should not, under any pretence, be prevented from voting so long as he proved that he had only one vote under the residence qualification. He should no more be prevented from voting, once he had acquired the right to vote, than the man who always remained in the district. It was to be presumed that they paid the same towards the general taxation of the country as other citizens, and the only difference was that one followed a profession which compelled him to remain permanently in one place, and the other a profession which compelled him to move about the country. The mere fact of a man being nomadic through profession should not deprive him of his right to vote. The only objection to the Bill on his side of the Committee was that it was a disfranchising Bill. They had no desire to perpetuate fraud or personation, or to prevent the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government from doing his best to prevent it; but their object was that in so doing he should not do injustice to a large body of men who had acquired the right to vote so long as they remained in the country.

The PREMIER said the suggestion of the hon. gentleman would be a very good one if it were possible for the presiding officers to ascertain whether a man's name was on any other roll. The condition the hon. member suggested would involve the necessity of the scrutineers having

a copy of every electoral roll in the colony before them. The man himself could not say whether his name was on any other roll; nor could the officers verify it. In the first place it would be impossible for any scrutineer or other person at the polling booth to discover whether that was the case or not; and in the second place the man himself might not know. The man's name might have been inadvertently left on two or three rolls in districts in which he had been resident, and that might not be known either to the scrutineer or to the elector. It was therefore necessary to find some more summary means of discovering it, and that was the difficulty. That would be easy enough in thickly settled districts, but that was not the case in large districts where it was impossible to communicate from one bench to another. Though he was anxious to meet the wishes of the hon. gentleman as far as possible, yet something was wanted which would work practically—where the person asked the question would be able to give an answer of his own knowledge, and where the person asking the question could form some idea as to whether the answer was correct.

Mr. ISAMBERT said the question could be met in this way: If an elector moved from one electorate to another he should apply to have his claim to vote transferred to the new electorate. By the time the six months had expired the change would have been effected.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that if the Premier would go a little further the difficulty would be overcome. Instead of six months, make it nine months, and that would give the elector an opportunity of getting his name on the new roll. That would be accepted, he believed, by the Opposition, and it would prevent any man from being disfranchised.

The PREMIER said the Bill was designed to meet cases where the clerk of petty sessions, in the first place, and afterwards the revision court, had, from ignorance or otherwise, omitted to strike a name off the roll. Supposing the clerk of petty sessions did his duty perfectly, whenever, in August, he discovered that a man had ceased to be resident in the district, he would strike his name off the roll, even if the man had only gone away for a month. The new roll would not be used till January, up to which time he could vote. That was the present law.

Mr. MOREHEAD: That ought to be amended, too.

The PREMIER said that of course a clerk of petty sessions could not know everybody, and it was impossible for him to make an accurate preliminary revision. He thought six months a fair concession, and the number of people disfranchised would be very few indeed.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the aim of the Opposition was to enable every person who could to put his name on an electoral roll, and for that six months was not sufficient, while nine months was not more than sufficient.

The PREMIER said that after a man had ceased to be a resident for six months he could scarcely have a claim to vote for that district.

Mr. MOREHEAD said his object was to give such a man time to have his name entered on the other roll. As to a man's right to vote, although he had ceased to be a resident in a certain district for six months, the man was still a resident in the colony, though not in a particular district.

The PREMIER said he had in his mind cases of people not resident in the colony. He had heard of persons voting at elections who had not been resident in the colony for many months. He knew instances of non-residents voting. He proposed now to omit the words in the 4th line, "the time of," with a view of inserting the words "at some time within six months before."

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put and negatived.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put.

Mr. MACROSSAN said he thought the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government went upon the assumption that an elector had a statutory right to vote after being six months in the colony. He went upon the declaration made by the hon. member for South Brisbane, which had been his (Mr. Macrossan's) opinion, that every man had an inalienable right, and that the mere fact of his leaving the district should not disfranchise him. If they had the means—which they had—to prevent him losing his vote by saying that nine months should be the time which would prevent him recording his vote in an electorate, they should do so, and by such means give him the opportunity of applying after being six months in the district to which he had gone—he would then be entitled to vote. The elector could then never lose his vote, and he did not believe any man should lose his vote. There were a few men who did not care for their vote, but the great majority did. Their legislation should be as far as possible upon the basis that every man had a right to vote, and when they came to consider the case of a new chum who could get a vote after being nine months in the colony, they should be careful that an old colonist of twenty years' standing should have the same right. The men that they were contending for had been in the colony for that time. They were nearly all old colonists who took to those occupations. New chums loafed, as a rule, too much about the towns. He therefore thought that the hon. gentleman should not stand seriously against the insertion of the word "nine" instead of "six."

The PREMIER said he fully appreciated the force of the hon. member's argument. He concurred in the argument that every man ought to have a vote of some description, and that he ought not to be deprived of his vote in one district before he had a vote for another. He admitted that, and under the circumstances he would not further oppose the hon. member's suggestion, and would submit to the insertion of the word "nine."

The HON. B. B. MORETON asked how the electors' names would be got off the original roll. The names would remain on the roll until the next revision court. Men would then be able to vote in the two districts under the residence clause.

The PREMIER said the elector would not be entitled to vote for the two districts. Say an elector of North Brisbane were to change his residence and reside at South Brisbane. He could not apply to be put on the South Brisbane roll until he had resided there for six months; he would then have to wait three months before he could get his name on the South Brisbane roll. At the expiration of nine months from his going to live in South Brisbane he would be entitled to vote.

The HON. B. B. MORETON: His name would still be on the roll for North Brisbane.

The PREMIER: Yes, but he would not be entitled to vote. As to getting the name off the roll, it was a matter which under the existing scheme could not be put right. He believed the present mode of compiling the electoral rolls was utterly wrong.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put and passed.

The PREMIER moved the omission in line 4 of the word "is," with a view of inserting the words "has been."

Mr. FOXTON said that, unless he was very much mistaken, the clause as proposed to be adopted would only come into operation when the clerk of petty sessions had not done his duty by already striking off the names of the men who had ceased to reside in the district. As the principal Act stood, it was the duty of clerks of petty sessions to strike off those names at the earliest opportunity, no matter whether the six or nine months had expired. Consequently, the clause could only apply when the clerk of petty sessions, either wilfully or through misconception, or want of knowledge, had not done his duty. He thought that the principal Act should be very much more amended in order to provide that everybody on the roll should still have their votes for six months after they had ceased to reside in the district, if equal justice was to be dealt all round.

The PREMIER said it would work very fairly. The names were marked off in August, and they were entitled to vote up to December, the new roll not coming into operation till January. Sometimes it might be six or eight months; but except for a few weeks it would have a perfectly uniform operation.

Mr. SALKELD said it would very much confuse the working of the principal Act. A far simpler way to meet the objection which had been raised would be to adopt a system or devise a clause whereby an elector moving from one district to another had a right to apply to the revision court for a transfer to the other place, and at the same time have his name removed from the electoral roll on which it was. That would answer two purposes: it would prevent a man who removed from one district to another from being disqualified, and would also remove the names which ought not to remain on the roll. The great difficulty in the last and previous elections was that a great number of names on the roll belonged to persons who had left the district or the colony, or who were dead and were not able to vote. That had opened the door to evil-disposed persons to personate. He thought it was a simple way to remedy the difficulty.

The PREMIER said the suggestion was an excellent one in itself, but how would it be worked? The courts only sat at intervals, and there was no means of communication provided between one court and another. They could not allow the man to do it all himself. Then, again, the rolls were printed, and if a man wanted to get his name on another roll he would have to go through all the formalities, and to prove that he was *bonâ fide* entitled to vote in that district. All that would take a considerable amount of time. The only proper way to do it was by collecting the rolls every year. He did not believe in leaving the names on the roll year after year and allowing them to accumulate.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that if they adopted the transfer system a man could simply have his name transferred and walk away.

Amendment put and passed.

Question—That the clause as amended stand part of the Bill—put.

Mr. CHUBB said there was one matter on which he should like a little information. What was the proof of *bonâ fide* residence; would that be proved questions put by the returning officer, or how?

The PREMIER said the words used in the existing law, in the 57th clause, were—

"No person so required to answer the questions hereinbefore provided, or any of them, shall be permitted to vote until he shall have answered the same to the satisfaction of the returning officer."

If the man did not give a straightforward answer, or gave no answer at all, he should not be allowed to vote.

Question put and passed.

On clause 4, as follows:—

"In addition to the questions authorised by the fifty-second section of the principal Act to be put to electors, the presiding officer may, if he think fit, and shall, if required by any candidate or scrutineer, or if a proclamation to the effect hereinafter provided is in force in the district, put to any person claiming to be an elector and to vote in respect of the qualification of residence, before he shall have voted, but not afterwards, the following questions, that is to say—

1. Are you now a resident of this electoral district?
2. Where is your residence?

"No person required to answer such questions, or either of them, shall be permitted to vote until he shall have answered the same in writing, signed by him, to the satisfaction of the presiding officer, nor unless he shall have answered the first of such questions in the affirmative.

"Any person required to answer the second of such questions shall do so with particularity, and in such a manner as to clearly indicate the locality of his residence."

The PREMIER moved that in the first question, instead of the words "Are you now a resident of," the words "Have you been within the last nine months a *bonâ fide* resident within" be inserted.

Mr. NORTON said that the hon. gentleman would see that if a man had been only a week, out of the nine months, a *bonâ fide* resident, he could answer that question.

The PREMIER: Yes, quite so.

Amendment put and passed.

A verbal alteration having been made in the second question, the clause as amended was passed.

Clause 5—"Section 59 and principal Act to be construed accordingly"—was passed with two verbal alterations.

On clause 6—"Electors may be required to vote at nearest polling place or places"—

The PREMIER moved the omission of the words "they have elected to vote," in order to insert the words "such qualification arises or is situate."

Mr. MOREHEAD said that, in a large district like that which he represented, a considerable number of voters would be practically disfranchised by this clause. For instance, it would be practically disfranchising an elector if he were compelled to travel, say, from Surat to Goondiwindi, a distance of 300 miles, or even from Surat to St. George; and there might be carriers who might never be out of the district and yet they would continually be disfranchised if they were compelled to vote at the one or two nearest polling places to where their qualification arose

Mr. SMYTH said that in the early part of the evening a good deal had been said about miners, timber-getters, and carriers; and a proposal was made which he thought would meet the difficulty. It was proposed that owners of miners' rights and carrying and timber-getting licenses might be permitted to vote in any part of an electorate. He thought that proposal would meet the difficulty.

Mr. STEVENS said he did not like the clause, and he could not see why the Governor in Council should have power to single out certain districts to which to apply it. If it was to be applied to one he thought it should be applied to every electorate in the colony.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the objection he had to the clause was the way it worked with the succeeding clauses. He had also the same objection as the hon. member for Logan, as he did not see why one portion should be singled out in which to issue the proclamation to have

that portion of the Bill applied to it, while all the rest of the colony was to be allowed to go free. He did not think they should have such legislation as that. However, let them take it with the succeeding clauses. If a registered voter did not vote at one or two places appointed by proclamation, he must vote openly. If he voted at any other polling place, and he should be personated, when the votes were gone over by the returning officer the secret vote was the one taken, and the open vote, although it was recorded by the voter himself, was rejected. Really that was in favour of personation. That was the objection he took to the clause. He knew it was in the principal Act, but that did not make it any better, and as they were amending he thought they might also amend that part.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that, as they were amending the principal Act chiefly to prevent personation, he took it the hon. Premier would allow that portion to be amended. If a man voted openly and personated it would be easy enough to get at him, but if he personated secretly there was no chance of detecting him. It was the honest man who would vote openly, and the dishonest man who would vote secretly and personate. He might personate the man who voted openly, and the honest man's vote would be rejected. He thought that could not be the intention of the Government, but it would be the result of the clause as it stood.

The PREMIER said that what hon. gentlemen opposite had just said was perfectly correct, but it was like many other puzzles in the electoral law. They could not reject the secret vote, because they had no means of knowing for whom it was given. If they were to reject any it must be the open vote. There were, he thought, only three courses to take—the proposal before them, or preventing those men voting at all, or having no provisions of that sort at all. He believed himself that the proposal before them would be of great advantage, though he admitted it would be unfair to apply it to some districts at certain times. For instance, take large pastoral electorates — Burke, Gregory, Mitchell, Warrego, Maranoa, and Balonne: it would be unjust, he believed, to apply the provisions to those districts at shearing time, and he did not believe any Government would attempt to do such a thing. But there might be districts in the colony where it would be a proper and natural thing to do, and as the power to appoint polling places had not been abused, he had no reason to suppose that the provisions of the clause would ever be abused.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the leader of the Government had placed three alternatives before them, and he thought the better course for them to take would be to adopt the last alternative the hon. gentleman mentioned. He had pointed out five or six electorates in which grave injustice might be done to the electors at a certain time. The hon. gentleman pointed out one season of the year, but it might occur at others.

Mr. HAMILTON said he could give an instance where a very great hardship would accrue from the operation of the clause. When he was in the North lately he had been informed that between Herberton and Cairns there were about 1,000 horses belonging to packers. They could very well imagine from that the number of the owners, a very great number of whom resided at Herberton and Watsonville. At the time when an election came on 200 of them might be at Cairns, and, not being within the district, they would have to vote openly. It being known that they were out of the district, they might be personated in the electorate by those who resided in the neighbourhood where their qualification existed, and the result would be that their votes, actually signed by themselves with their own names, would be rejected, and they would be disfranchised, because their votes would not be counted at all. He thought that those votes should be accepted where it was perfectly well known that they were recorded by others who were entitled to give them. With regard to the previous clause, which stated that if any person voted out of his district he must vote openly, he would show how that would be a hardship to the voters in an electorate like his own. Between Maytown and Cooktown on one occasion there were 100 packers. Suppose a gentleman like the late member, Mr. Walsh, who once represented the Cook district, was putting up for an election, some hundreds of those packers lived at Maytown, and if they were in the Cook district at the time they would have to vote openly, and the person to whom they were under an obligation, or who might have some claim upon them, would know how they voted. The principle of voting by ballot would, by that means, be capsized, because those men would not be in a position to vote according to their consciences.

Mr. PALMER said that certain districts should be exempted from the application of the clause. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Balonne that a great number of electors in the large outside districts would be disfranchised if the clause was strictly carried out, and he protested against its application to such districts as he had the honour to represent.

Mr. MACROSSAN said he hoped the hon. the Premier would accept the advice which had been given, and let clauses 6, 7, and 8 be negatived. The hon. gentleman had already admitted that those clauses in the principal Act had been a dead-letter because they were so cumbrous; and why should they be inserted in the Bill where they would be still more cumbrous? Seeing that there was great objection to them in the pastoral districts spoken of by the hon. leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Burke, he thought they might be very well dispensed with. He (Mr. Macrossan) could give a number of arguments to prove that they would be equally as bad in some of the northern districts that were not pastoral districts, but he did not wish to occupy the time of the Committee, being anxious to get on to the Estimates, which was the real work of the session. Clause 3 was practically the Bill, and the hon. gentleman, having passed that in an amended form, ought to be very well satisfied with leaving out clauses 6, 7, and 8, and amending clause 9, as he intended to amend it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he could point to two members on the other side of the House—the Minister for Lands and the hon. member for Clermont—who he was certain would agree with every word that had fallen from the hon. member for Burke and himself with respect to the clause. Although it had been said by the Premier that the clause in the principal Act had remained a dead-letter, and although it might continue to remain a dead-letter in the Bill, yet should it become law it would be in the power of any Government to exercise it, and they might not always have as just and as honourable a Government as they had at present. They might have a Government who, for electioneering purposes, might make use of the clause and abuse it in a way that was not now contemplated. He was sure the Minister for Lands would admit that in his district such a provision would be very harassing and embarrassing at the time of an election, and that the hon. member for Clermont would say the same.

The PREMIER said it would meet the case if it were provided that the clause should not apply to certain pastoral districts, which were the only ones in which any hardships were likely to arise.

Mr. MOREHEAD said there were objections to specifying certain districts of the colony in that way. It was impossible to say when a pastoral district might cease to have that term applicable to it, and he thought it would be much better not to make any invidious distinctions in a measure which was supposed to have general application; and to omit the clauses referred to.

Mr. FOXTON said the objection to the clause appeared to be that the *bonâ fide* voter, if away from home, might have to vote openly, and that he might be personated elsewhere by someone who would vote secretly, and that on comparing the rolls the *bonâ fide* vote would be rejected in favour of the vote which was not *bonâ fide*. It appeared to him, however, that the danger was reduced to a minimum by the fact that the secret vote could only be recorded where a man was well known—that was, in one of the two polling places nearest to the place where his residence qualification arose. Consequently, he did not think, looking at the clause in that light, that there was the same objection that would appear to obtain from the remarks that had fallen from members of the Opposition.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he could not see why the open voter should be deprived of his vote. If the returning officers and scrutineers did their duty, then no secret vote could be recorded without the electors being questioned and proper answers given.

Mr. MACROSSAN said there was a great deal of truth in what had fallen from the hon. member for Carnarvon in regard to voters being known to the presiding officers; but it was pretty well known that those officers did not know all the voters in electorates. They might do so in small places; but in large districts—for instance, the district he represented, Townsville, which was something more than Townsville proper, extending hundreds of miles on either side, and westward about 100 miles—it would be impossible in that electorate for returning or presiding officers to know the people who were entitled to vote. But, in addition to that, personators were very audacious. It was well known to hon. members that persons who were well known citizens of Ipswich, Brisbane, and other places, had been personated, and if the presiding officers had had their wits about them at the time they could have put a stop to it. But men had not always their wits about them, and personators took advantage of that, and in the hurry and bustle that was going on in the polling booth they were overlooked, so that the hardship remained the same. The great objection to the clause was, that whilst the personator was supported the honest man was punished. It would be much better to accept the suggestion that had been made and withdraw the clauses, which were not material to the Bill.

Mr. STEVENS said his great objection to the clause was that it would strike a heavy blow at voting by ballot. If they were to have open voting, it should be made general instead of partial in its application.

Mr. HAMILTON said he should have attached greater weight to the remarks of the hon. member for Carnarvon were it not for certain cases that had come within his own knowledge. In one case a man, well known in the district, and lame of a leg and an arm, was successfully personated at an election; and in another case a Chinaman actually personated a white man. He congratulated himself that those men did not vote for him.

Mr. PALMER said the presiding officer and the scrutineers were often sent hundreds of miles. In his own electorate one was sent from Georgetown to Woolgar, and another from Georgetown to Carl Creek, a distance of nearly 400 miles. How were they to know any of the electors in those districts?

Mr. NORTON said he objected to the clause because it was not applicable to every district, and also because a vote correctly given was to be disallowed because someone had previously personated that voter. It would be far better that ten bad votes should be allowed to pass than that one vote that was known to be good and sound should be disqualified. A man surely ought not to be disqualified because someone else had taken his place without his knowledge.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said they had not only to guard against personation, but against double voting, and a Bill of that kind would be incomplete without a provision to that effect. The Bill also imposed an effective check to personation. The scrutineer and presiding officer would have an incentive to diligence in scrutinising every vote, and the friends of an absent voter would also be on the strict lookout—in fact, every man would be a scrutineer, and a check would be placed on any attempt to personate an absent man. If the clause were eliminated the Bill would be deprived of one of its most excellent provisions.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the concession made by the Premier showed that he, at least, was not so sanguine as to the wisdom of the clause. If the clause was inapplicable to the outside districts it must be more or less inapplicable to every other district. No good, and very serious harm, might arise from the passing of it.

Mr. BLACK said the clauses were either very bad ones or very good ones. If they were very good—and he thought there was a great deal very good in them—they should be made applicable to the whole of the colony. It should not be left in the power of any Ministry for the time being to put them in force in certain districts. He did not entirely agree with all that had fallen from hon. members on his own side of the Committee, and he believed that if the clauses were made compulsory all over the colony they would do more to kill personation than anything else in the Bill. If voters were compelled to vote at the polling booth nearest to where their residence qualification arose, personation would be almost impossible. He did not consider open voting such a very dreadful thing, and believed that honest men in the colony were quite prepared for open voting. There was another aspect of the question that had not been mentioned, and that was, that the saturnalia and orgies they saw at elections would be materially reduced if the electors were not in the habit of congregating in large masses, as at present in the large towns. In many districts, during the day of election, all business was suspended, and drink was brought to bear to a very damaging extent on the purity of elections. Those clauses, if allowed to remain, should, therefore, be made compulsory all over the colony; but if it was to be left to the discretion of a Ministry to proclaim certain districts, the clause had better be struck out altogether. What held good for one part of the colony would hold good for any other part. It might be necessary, perhaps, to exempt some of the extreme districts of the West, though he had not heard any argument why that should be done. The clause should be made compulsory all over the colony.

Mr. SALKELD said that previous to the present discussion he had a very strong objection to part of the 6th clause relating to the application of the clause to one district and not to another, but since he had heard the arguments of the hon. member for Burke, and other hon. members who he must admit knew the circumstances of the districts referred to better than he did, he was inclined to think with them. He thought there was great sense and reason in the offer of the Premier to exempt certain districts. Injustice, some hon. members said, might be done to a great number of electors. The hon. member for Mackay said he had heard no arguments why any electoral district should be exempted from the operation of the clause. He (Mr. Salkeld) confessed he had heard very strong arguments in favour of that course. He had a very strong objection to leaving a matter of that kind in the hands of the Governor in Council. They ought to restrict and confine as far as possible such powers. While he was speaking on the subject he might mention that it was quite possible for men to personate at the places where they were well known, but the chances of detection were so great that, as a rule, personators did not venture near the residence of the person they intended to personate. He had had considerable experience as a scrutineer, and he had noticed that when an individual intended to personate anyone he did not go to the place where he was well known, nor to the place where the person whom he intended to personate resided, but he went to a third place—a place at some distance away. That was the way so much personation had taken place. He would much prefer the clause if it went the full length and restricted voters to vote at one place. By leaving it optional to vote at one of two polling places an opportunity was given to vote twice, and many of the elections would prove that. The optional part of the clause left the door open to personators. It was seldom a man voted more than twice—the greater number of personations being double votes. If the clause was left as it was in that respect the door was thrown open to fraud.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he believed they were now principally discussing the 6th clause of the Bill, and he thought there was a real difficulty and objection in the clause. One objection had already been alluded to by the hon. member for Balonne. The clause read—

> "It shall be lawful for the Governor in Council, by proclamation, to order and declare that at any election for any electoral district all electors."

That would necessitate some elector whose qualification was freehold going to the polling place nearest to where his qualification was situated. He might be residing scores or hundreds of miles away from that polling place. The clause was not intended to aim at the prevention of fraud on the part of those electors whose qualification was freehold or leasehold, yet he considered that it was quite as possible for a man whose qualification was freehold to personate and double vote as a man whose qualification was simply residence. It was quite possible for a freehold elector to personate. He had the heartiest sympathy with the objects of the Bill, but he thought those two points ought to be made perfectly clear. It would be a hardship, he considered, if an elector had to travel scores or hundreds of miles in order to record his vote because his qualification happened to be in that part of the electorate. He should be glad if the Premier would give them any information on that point in his possession.

Mr. CHUBB said the hon. member who had just sat down had raised a strong argument against the clause. He pointed out that a person possessing a freehold qualification was no more incapable of personation than a man with a residence qualification, and wherever an elector happened to be resident he would have to travel a long distance to record his vote—that was, to where his freehold qualification was situated. He agreed with the hon. member in that, and he would point out that if any elector did not choose to do that he ran the risk of being personated. If an elector holding a freehold wished to secure his vote he would have to travel to those polling places to secure it; otherwise, if he voted openly, and however careful he might be, he might find that he had lost his vote by reason of some person who happened to be near where his qualification was situated having personated him. The hon. member (Mr. Salkeld) furnished another good reason why the clause was an objectionable one. He said it would enable a person to vote at either of the two polling places. Of course the hon. member was speaking of polling places in the southern districts where they were not many miles apart; but any member who knew anything of the northern or western districts knew that some polling places were as much as 150 miles apart, and that that could not take place there. But in the southern districts of the colony it would be quite possible for a person to vote at two polling places. The Attorney-General had touched upon the question of double voting, and had referred to the 8th section. That was the section he remarked upon the other evening, and he pointed out at the same time that the clause appeared to be intended to apply to double voting, and not to personation. The marginal note said "If elector votes secretly and openly, open vote to be rejected." He understood that to mean one and the same person. It applied to double voting, not to personation. The 8th section would not cover impersonation in all cases. The Premier might withdraw those clauses. They would place a burden on voters, in addition to those contained in the 53rd and 54th sections of the principal Act.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he did not think there was any great danger. A certain amount of discretion was allowed to the Governor in Council. It was competent for the Governor in Council to appoint a polling place hundreds of miles away from the limits of the electorate where the polling was going on. There was, for example, a polling place for the Kennedy at Townsville, which was very nearly a hundred miles off. The same thing was done with regard to the Logan election. Brisbane was made a polling place. The Governor in Council, however, did not see fit to appoint Brisbane a polling place for the Darling Downs, and he, as an elector, was disfranchised on that account. There could be no law made by which some persons could not be deprived of their rights. The Governor in Council had power to fix polling places where he liked. Would any Government be so insane as to take advantage of the peculiar circumstances of an electorate, such as those which had been referred to, and inflict a gross hardship and injustice upon them? It had never been done in the past. The sections in the principal Act regarding polling districts had never been put into force. It might transpire that the provisions of that Act might not be put in force either. With regard to what the hon. member for Bowen said as to the 8th section, he had overlooked the fact that one of the provisions of the principal Act was that, where a mark should be placed opposite the voter's name on any roll, that should be *primâ facie* evidence of his having voted, and it would always be assumed that the right owner of that vote recorded it. If a man had his name struck off for voting secretly, it

was *primâ facie* evidence that he recorded it. Then if he voted openly, there was proof positive that the man voted there. Unless there was some provision made by which persons could be controlled, as to the place where they should vote, they would always have to contend with double voting.

Mr. HAMILTON said he failed to see why persons should be more restricted who were qualified by residence than those who were entitled to vote under any other qualification. It seemed an attack upon them—the working class.

Mr. MOREHEAD said there was no doubt that if the Committee passed the Bill they would be placing a limitation upon those qualified to vote as residents. Why should there be a limitation upon the franchise? The law, as it stood, allowed the resident elector the same privileges as the holder of a freehold, or any other qualification by which a man voted in Queensland. There must be some reason for it, but he could see none. Under the Bill a man with a residence qualification would only be able to vote at real inconvenience, and perhaps have to travel a great distance to record his vote in secret. The clause was against all the law of the land, as it stood at present. It limited the right of the electors, and he did not see any particular crime that those possessed of residence qualification only had committed, that the Government should come down and bring in a Bill of that kind, which would prevent a great number of people giving their votes in the same way as their fellow-electors. He hoped the Premier would not force on the clause. He had got the backbone of the Bill already.

The PREMIER said the reasons why the distinction had been made between residents and freeholders were two: Nearly all personation was done in the names of residents: that was one reason. The other was that residents did not usually reside far away from their qualifications, whereas freeholders had not their homes so close to the place of their qualifications. Those were the reasons why distinctions had been made; but the clause had been made as flexible as possible. Hon. members seemed to object to the system on various grounds. The system of having polling districts he considered an admirable one. The only way to prevent personation had been pointed out by the hon. member for Mackay—namely, to make people vote near where they were known. In a district extending for hundreds of miles it was perfectly easy for a man to turn up in an outside polling place, and the chances were 100 to 1 that no person would know whether he was the man or not. Personation was made extremely easy by the law; in fact, it was almost facilitated. One way to prevent it would be to give voters' rights, but during the two years it was tried the system did not work well. He knew that in one election in a constituency which he at the time represented only about one-third of the electors were entitled to vote, the others having no electors' rights issued to them. As he had said, he believed the system of polling districts to be a good one; but that now proposed would be better. However, he was prepared to accept a compromise if hon. members would agree to it. In a large electoral district there might be two or three divisions, and there might be several polling places in each division. That would not go so far as the proposal in the Bill, but it would be better than the present law, which was practically unworkable. If they adopted some recognised boundaries, such as a police district or a division, he believed the system might be put into operation, and that it would to a great extent prevent personation and fraud nobody could doubt. What he had suggested would not make the system as complete as that proposed in the Bill, but it would be better than the system at present in force.

Mr. KATES said the provision would in a great measure prevent personation. There was a great deal of truth in what had fallen from the hon. member for Townsville and other hon. members opposite as to the hardship that would be inflicted in the outside districts, and that men such as miners would be disfranchised; but what was that compared to the great benefit that would be conferred on the bulk of the electors? Two or three districts might suffer, but the remainder would derive great benefit. The proposal would stop personation effectually. It was a great pity that the Premier had not attached to the Bill an amendment of the Electoral Roll Act. The evil lay in the compilation of the rolls. As long as the 19th clause of that Act was in existence there would be stuffing of rolls. He thought the onus of proof should not rest on the objector but on the applicant. Every three months long lists of names appeared in the newspapers; but who was to object? If anybody wished to object he had to put down 5s.; and he ran the risk, if the other side employed counsel, of having to pay two guineas more. Could anybody be expected to risk £40 or £50 in connection with the stuffing the rolls? He mentioned this matter in the hope that the leader of the Government would bring in a Bill to alter such a state of things. With regard to the clause before the Committee, he agreed with what had fallen from the hon. member for Townsville. It was undesirable that the man who voted openly should run the risk of losing his vote, while the man who voted secretly did not run any such risk. He would suggest to the Premier to amend the clause in such a way as to meet the views of hon. members on both sides of the Committee.

Mr. MACROSSAN said he did not think there was any improvement in the proposition made by the Premier. The great objection was that the man who voted openly lost his vote if he was personated. They ought to do all they could to prevent double voting, but at the same time they ought to be careful not to deprive any elector of his rights. He recollected the time when the Attorney-General did not like the Governor in Council as well as he did now.

The PREMIER: How ideas do change with a change of sides! No one has changed as much as you have.

Mr. MACROSSAN: At one time the Attorney-General thought the Governor in Council could not do anything right; now he could not do anything wrong. He (Mr. Macrossan) thought other hon. members would have the same objection as he had. In the Cook district there were hundreds of men who were employed packing, who took out no licenses whatever. They had horses and were engaged packing goods from the coast. No means, as far as he could see at present, could prevent those men losing their votes; they were likely to be personated when they were outside their district. The effect would simply be that the vote of the wrong man would be taken. There were many other objections that could be urged, but he did not see any use in continuing the debate. He was quite sure that the Premier saw the objections as forcibly as they did, and he ought to give more weight to the argument that no honest man should be deprived of his vote even to prevent personation or double voting.

The PREMIER said that of course he was trying not to put any obstacles in the way of honest men voting. The hon. gentleman had given an illustration of the effect of the clause in

case of the packers, but the proposal he (the Premier) had made would, he thought, meet that case very fairly. There was no doubt that in a great many cases of the kind great injustice would be done. He was quite satisfied that what was proposed would diminish personation; in fact, personation would be almost impossible. The question was whether the advantage of making personation impossible did not outweigh the disadvantage of disfranchising comparatively a few men.

Mr. MACROSSAN said there was no law to make personation impossible. The electors' rights, which were in force for two years, went as nearly as possible in doing that; but even then there was personation. They were in force in 1872 and 1873. The general election of 1873 was held under the electors' rights, and just immediately before the election the great rush to the Palmer broke out. Hundreds of men left Charters Towers and went to the Palmer. At that time the Palmer was not situated in any constituency, and what did the men do with their rights? They left them behind with their friends. It was impossible, therefore, in any law to prevent personation. They agreed so far that it was right to prevent personating, but they were not in accord in the mode proposed for doing it. He certainly did not believe in the way proposed by the Government. He thought the majority of men were prepared to vote by ballot. It was the law of the land, and had been for some years, and it was also the law of Great Britain, and the working man seemed to agree with it. But what he objected to was a voter losing his vote if he was personated. In that lay the great objection to the Bill.

Mr. HAMILTON said the hon. member for Burke the other evening had instanced very clearly cases in which personation could occur. He mentioned cases where the scrutineers or presiding officer served in a part of a district to which they did not belong, and it was impossible for them to prevent personation. It had further been clearly shown that night with respect to the case of 200 or 300 packers living at Herberton when at the time of an election they might be at Cairns, sixty miles distant. They would have to vote openly; and those persons residing at Herberton, knowing them to be away, could take advantage of their absence and personate, and then the votes of the personators would be counted and the open votes of the *bonâ fide* voters to which they had attached their names would not be counted. That was a direct proof that the Bill provided a premium for personation instead of stopping it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he hoped that the hon. Premier would see his way to strike out the next three clauses. They had carried the main principle of the Bill in the 3rd clause, and no possible benefit was to be derived by going on with the discussion. They were on the Opposition side quite prepared to complete the Bill that night in the event of the clauses being taken on after the next three, and they would very likely be prepared to hear the hon. Premier's speech on the second reading of the Polynesian Labourers Bill.

Mr. NORTON said that only two members of the Government had given their opinions, and he should like to hear what the rest had to say in reply to the arguments of the Opposition. The powers sought to be provided by the clauses to which objection was made were already given by the present Act. The Government had been fairly met by his (Mr. Norton's) side; the clauses did not seem to be very important, and under the circumstances he hoped the Premier would see his way to withdraw them.

The PREMIER said it was true that the Government already had just as much power as was sought by the clauses in question, but by those clauses the power could be exercised with less inconvenience to individual voters than under the present Act. The discussion had gone away to some extent from the object of the clauses, which was in the interest of the honest voter as well as against the dishonest voter. The proposed provision would entail less hardship than the existing law. But he did not attach so much importance to the latter part as to the former part of the Bill, which was intended specially to meet an evil which had arisen lately. If the present were an ordinary session he should not feel disposed to withdraw any part of the Bill without full discussion; but unless a strong majority insisted on passing them he was not sufficiently enamoured of the clauses at present to take up the time of the Committee.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked whether the Premier intended to press the clauses? He quite agreed with the hon. gentleman's reasons for not doing so. As he had already stated, the hon. gentleman had gained all he wished, and the other clauses were what one of the hon. gentleman's colleagues recently described himself to be—like the fifth wheel of the coach. That being so, it would be as well to withdraw them.

The PREMIER said he had no objection, but hon. members must not be surprised if they found the clauses relating to polling districts put into operation instead of the provisions of the present Bill.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Nothing that you do will surprise us.

Amendment withdrawn.

Clauses 6 and 7 put and negatived.

On clause 8—"If elector votes secretly and openly, open vote to be rejected"—

Mr. KATES said that the 6th clause was the only one that would prevent personation, and he was sorry that it had been withdrawn, because without it the Bill would be nothing.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 10 passed as printed.

The PREMIER said that, at the suggestion of the hon. member for Gympie, he would move the following new clause to follow clause 10:—

> Every notice by any person claiming to have his name inscribed on any electoral list shall, in addition to the particulars required by the 7th section of the Electoral Rolls Act of 1879, specify the age of the claimant.

Mr. CHUBB suggested the addition of the words "and occupation" after the word "age."

The PREMIER said age was part of the qualification, and ought to be required under the existing Act. Occupation was no part of the qualification.

New clause put and passed.

The PREMIER said the hon. member for Fortitude Valley and his hon. colleague the Minister for Works had made another suggestion, which was this: As had been stated in the course of the debate, clerks of petty sessions often left off the rolls the names of persons who never discovered the omission until they came to vote; it was therefore suggested that notice should be sent to such persons, and he accordingly moved the following new clause:—

> Whenever, in pursuance of the eleventh section of the Electoral Rolls Act of 1879, the clerk of petty sessions shall have placed the word "dead," "left," or "disqualified," against the name of any person on any electoral roll or list, he shall forthwith send by post to such person, at his usual or last known place of abode, a notice informing him that it is intended to omit his name from the electoral roll or list.

Mr. MOREHEAD said while he had no objection to the amendment he thought it was a very inconvenient place to insert important additions to a Bill. It was a very bad precedent; and although he knew the Government were not likely to take advantage of it, he hoped they would not adopt the practice in future.

The PREMIER said he quite agreed with the hon. gentleman, and if there had been anything at all disputable in the clauses he should not have proposed them in the way he had. But the principle was good, and would be consented to unanimously.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked how it was proposed to address dead men? How would they know to which side they had gone?

The PREMIER: Their last known address.

New clause put and passed.

Clause 11—"Short title"—put and passed.

Question—That the preamble stand part of the Bill—put.

The PREMIER said as the preamble was unnecessary it should be omitted.

Question put and negatived.

The CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill to the House with amendments.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House again went into Committee of the Whole, for the purpose of reconsidering clause 2.

Clause 2 having been negatived,

The CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill to the House with a further amendment.

The report was adopted, and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving the adjournment of the House, stated that the business for to-morrow would be the delivery of the Financial Statement, and afterwards the second reading of the Pacific Islands Labourers Act Amendment Bill. He added that the question would probably arise to-morrow as to the adjournment of the House over Thursday.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked how the question could be raised to-morrow. No notice had been given of it, and it would certainly be opposed by that side of the House.

The House adjourned at seventeen minutes to 10 o'clock.