

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

TUESDAY, 1 OCTOBER 1907

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

TUESDAY, 1 OCTOBER, 1907.

The PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir Arthur Morgan) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

QUESTION.

EMPLOYEES IN GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

If he will lay upon the table (of the Council) a return showing—

1. The names and positions of all persons employed in the Government Printing Office?
2. The length of service of each?
3. The salary and rate of wage paid to each?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION replied—

I regret that I have not received the reply, but as soon as I get it I will communicate it to the hon. gentleman and to the Council. If possible, I will have it to-morrow, and will attend to the matter personally.

ELECTIONS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

* HON. F. T. BRETNALL: It would be remembered that on Wednesday last the Hon. Mr. Thynne proposed an amendment to follow clause 2 of the Bill, but acting on a suggestion made to

him during the course of the debate, he asked permission to postpone consideration of the new clause that he had previously moved until after clause 3 had been disposed of. Clause 3 was disposed of, and the provisions of the Act in relation to the postal ballot remained in full force by the excision of that clause. It therefore became all the more necessary to insure the object which the Hon. Mr. Thynne had, and that was to safeguard the purity of the postal vote. There was no penalty provided in the existing Acts for any improper conduct on the part of any justices of the peace or any other witness of a signature to a postal vote, and the object of the Hon. Mr. Thynne, as he understood, was to insure that there should be some protection for the postal voter by making provision for penal consequences to any witness who improperly, not to say illegally, witnessed a signature to a postal vote. He did not think it necessary to go over the numerous arguments which had been advanced for and against the postal vote itself. For the present they had disposed of that part of the question. The object now, it seemed to him, was to take care that anybody who committed those improprieties of which they had heard so much during the debate should be treated as guilty of a misdemeanour, and be subject to a severe penalty. Now, what was proposed to be done previously was not to punish the wrongdoer but to punish those who were the victims of wrongdoers, and that, he thought, was where Parliament was making a serious mistake. It reminded him rather of what he had heard of some people with whom some of them had been brought into contact even in their own land, who, when their particular deity did not answer their desires in the way they wished, smashed him up and got a new one; and because the principle of voting by post did not answer the expectations of those who introduced it in the Act two years ago, and fathered it, they wished now to abolish it. That was, they wanted to smash their deity to pieces and wanted something else in lieu of it. Well, the object of some hon. gentlemen had been to retain that principle because they believed it to be a good one, and now the amendment was intended to safeguard the principle by making it a misdemeanour to do anything which could be regarded as illegal or improper. He did not think he need say anything more about it. The Hon. Mr. Thynne had been called away from Brisbane, and had asked him to see that his amendment was brought forward, and, after consultation with one or two of his friends on that side, he had been asked to propose the amendment, which he now did. It was slightly altered in the introduction, and read as follows:—

After section 122 of the consolidated Acts the following section is inserted:—

123. Every postmaster or justice of the peace who—

- (a) Attempts to ascertain or discover, or directly or indirectly aids or attempts to aid in ascertaining or discovering, the person for whom any person voting by postal ballot intends or attempts to vote or has voted, or who, having in the exercise of his office obtained knowledge of the person for whom any elector intended or attempted to vote or had voted, discloses such knowledge, unless in answer to some question put in the course of proceedings before some competent court or other tribunal; or
- (b) Being an agent, whether paid or unpaid, of any candidate, or being a member of any committee or organisation formed or constituted for the purpose of promoting or securing the election of any candidate, receives from any voter or delivers to such voter, or attempts to so receive or deliver, any postal ballot-paper, or attests the signature of any voter to any postal ballot certificate, or otherwise does or

attempts to do any of the acts or things which a postmaster or justice of the peace is authorised to do in relation to a postal ballot-paper;

shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and on conviction thereof shall be liable to imprisonment for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.

Without any further remarks, he begged to move that the clause as proposed follow clause 2 of the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The hon. gentleman made an assumption which had been made all through the debate, that the female vote went against liberal principles at the last election. The real reason in his judgment why the Liberal party of this State did not come back with overwhelming strength was the unfortunate division that took place between two parties in the political world. He need not say anything more on that point. He did not think there was a shadow of evidence to show that the Government was resentful against the female vote.

Hon. P. ATREY: They have no need to be.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Nor was there the slightest reason to believe that the female vote was unfavourable to liberal principles. There had also been the old story that it was an attempt to prevent the women of Queensland from voting. Nothing could be more false and untrue. Over and over again during the course of the debate he said that the Government deeply regretted that in cutting out that electoral cancer, as one hon. gentleman called it, they would be obliged to inflict disability on some women. But that it was an attempt to disfranchise the women of Queensland was an absolute absurdity—to disfranchise them as a whole—because hon. gentlemen used the allegation against the Government that it was an attempt to disqualify and disfranchise them as a whole. It was nothing of the sort. The men and women who voted by post only numbered 13,000 out of an electoral roll of 220,000, and he must distinctly repudiate and deny the statement that the Government had any desire to disfranchise as a whole the women of the State. On the contrary, he thought the woman vote was a very desirable thing. He always contended for it at the time that those who now posed as the friends of the woman voter were very lukewarm in their attempts to put it into a concrete form of legislation. He entirely repudiated that doctrine, and, so far from trying to break their joss, they were merely trying to protect women from designing schemers and electioneering agents, who beguiled them, and who, by a form of intimidation—as he showed the other day—introduced corruption into elections. Two concurrent systems of voting, by which the voter could take his choice, enabled the agent to find out, or make a very shrewd guess, how the voter was disposed. He believed, at the last election, that was carried out to a scandalous extent. With regard to the amendment, he opposed it before because, to a certain extent, it strengthened the principle of postal voting by women, and because it would be impossible to enforce such a penal enactment. It seemed to him that it was an amplification of the 3rd subsection of the 114th section of the Criminal Code, which said—

Having in the exercise of his office at an election obtained knowledge or the means of knowledge of the candidate for whom any person has voted at the election, discloses or aids in disclosing such knowledge otherwise than in answer to a question put in the course of proceedings before some competent court or tribunal.

It was perfectly true that the amendment went further, and said that any attempt to discover how a person voted was a misdemeanour. He

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was opposed to the amendment, and would vote against it, and, if he could, he would defeat it. He did not think he could say any more.

HON. P. MURPHY pointed out that in a previous debate on the postal vote it was freely stated that offences against the Electoral Act were looked upon as very light matters by all sections of the community, and that it was almost impossible to get a conviction or to secure anything like an adequate penalty where an offence was proved. The amendment now under consideration seemed to be open to the same objection, inasmuch as it provided only that on conviction a person should be "liable" to imprisonment for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour. It was, therefore, left to the option of the magistrate whether a person convicted of a misdemeanour should be punished or not. He held that where an offence was proved up to the hilt the magistrate should have no option in the matter of punishment. There should be a minimum and a maximum penalty, and only between that minimum and maximum should the magistrate be allowed to exercise his discretion. If the hon. gentleman who moved the amendment was honest—and he had no reason to believe that he was not honest—in his desire to purify the law and deter people from committing breaches of the law, he would amend his amendment in the direction he had indicated.

HON. P. AIREY regarded the amendment as a proposal to confirm or strengthen the principle of the postal vote to which he objected. The Hon. Mr. Brentnall stated that the proposition to abolish the postal vote reminded him of a custom which prevailed among certain savage people, who, when their deity did not do what they wanted, smashed it up. Well, it seemed to him that in fixing all penalties on the justice of the peace who violated or neglected his duty, the hon. gentleman was doing the same thing—inflicting punishment on the "Joss." The plain fact of the matter was that there was already provided in the Criminal Code, as his hon. friend had shown, punishment for the offences set forth in the amendment. But severity of punishment was no deterrent in such cases as those under consideration. There were men in the country, who, for the sake of some pecuniary profit or some personal advantage, would be inclined to take the risk of punishment in regard to the offences which they all so much deprecated. If they were to make legislation in this matter effective they should make the means of detection more sure. Did this amendment render the means of detection more certain? It did not. When it was stated the other evening that if political organisations attempted to stuff the rolls the vigour of other organisations would prevent them doing so, the Hon. Mr. Thynne said, "How are you going to sheet it home? How are you going to collect evidence? How are you going to trace signatures?" Every one of those objections would apply equally to the amendment now before the Committee. Every difficulty which would prevent them sheeting home an offence as regarded the stuffing of rolls would be experienced in connection with this amendment. The real difficulty was that people did not regard offences against the Electoral Act seriously. They said, "It is only a little bit of a political dodge; he did not mean any harm; he is not a bad fellow; I will not give evidence against him; it would be mean and spiteful to do so." But his chief objection to the amendment was that it would tend to confirm the postal vote, and that in voting for the amendment he would be assisting to patch up, heal up, and make respectable a thing which was not respectable.

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HON. M. JENSEN: As a matter of fact, the amendment was utterly valueless, and would not prevent a single evil which occurred at the last general election. The penalty was for attempting to ascertain how a person voted, or for disclosing such knowledge. But these were not the offences which were committed at the last election. The offences in question were intimidation and coercion, and this amendment would not be of the slightest value in preventing any justice of the peace committing such offences. It would be possible for a justice of the peace to say that he had intimidated a female voter, that he had threatened her, and told her she would be unpopular if she voted for so and so, and yet he would not bring himself within the amendment. He would not have attempted to ascertain for whom she voted, but would simply have threatened her. The hon. member who had taken charge of the amendment had spoken of members on this side punishing their own deity. The justice of the peace clause was introduced by the other side of the House, and was opposed by the members on this side. On that occasion he stated that he would prefer to see the measure defeated rather than passed with the justice of the peace clause. As to the 2nd paragraph of the amendment, which sought to impose punishment upon an agent or member of an organisation committing either of the offences mentioned, there might be a little more to be said in favour of this, but after all it was a valueless provision, because they would never be able to prove that the defendant was an agent or member of a committee or organisation. A person committing any of these offences would take care not to be an agent or a member of a committee or organisation. Both candidates might be honest and altogether opposed to any attempt at intimidation. But supposing the question between the two candidates was temperance or anti-temperance, what was there to prevent any man in strong sympathy with either of these movements going round and exercising coercion on his own account? And if he did so, it would be impossible to prove that he was an agent or a member of any committee or organisation.

HON. F. I. POWER intended to vote for the amendment. He could not follow the argument that because it was difficult to prove an offence that was a reason why they should not provide a penalty for that offence. Some persons had spent a good deal of money in trying to prove gold stealing, and had never been able to do so, but that was no argument against the law which enacted that gold stealing should be punished. He could understand the opposition of the Hon. Mr. Airey to the amendment, because that gentleman was opposed to the postal vote altogether—in other words he was in favour of disfranchising a great many women in this State.

HON. P. AIREY: Oh, no!

HON. F. I. POWER: The hon. gentleman might say, "Oh, no," but that would be the effect of the abolition of the postal vote. Nature had provided that woman should be the bearer of children, and there were times when it was impossible for a woman to go to a polling-booth to vote. This was particularly the [4 p.m.] case in the bush. He had been about the bush a good deal at the last election, and he knew numbers of women who did not vote because they were unable to leave their homes. If the witnessing of postal votes by justices of the peace was such an evil as hon. gentlemen opposite contended, how was it that at one and the same time some six justices of the peace were created among the members of one candidate's committee? He was

at some disadvantage in speaking of the objection to the postal vote, because the people in the district in which he lived were so scrupulous that there were very few complaints to make against them in that respect. He did not know of the abuses which had been mentioned, but he had heard of one case in which a justice of the peace opened a ballot paper, read it, and tore it up. Such action should not be allowed to go unpunished. If convictions would be difficult under the amendment, then those who raised that objection should propose something which would make convictions easier.

HON. M. JENSEN: Abolish the postal vote altogether.

HON. F. I. POWER: It had been decided that they should retain the postal vote, and the hon. gentleman was not going back on that.

HON. M. JENSEN: I hope so.

HON. F. I. POWER: The hon. gentleman could not alter that now, because the matter had been settled. The position occupied to the amendment by hon. gentlemen opposite was somewhat anomalous. They said that women possessed the highest intelligence and the greatest integrity, and that it was almost a crime that they should not have a vote, and in the next breath they said that women were easily led.

HON. M. JENSEN: Threatened.

HON. F. I. POWER: He had never in his life met a woman who could be threatened, but he had met some who had threatened him. His experience was that women were just as independent as men in saying what they would do and what they would not do, and he could not, therefore, understand hon. gentlemen proposing a provision which would disfranchise a great many women in this State. The strongest argument in favour of the postal ballot was that in many instances the position of women prevented them from going to the polling-booth. Possibly something might be done to abolish postal voting in the large centres of population; but there was a good deal to be said in favour of allowing even women in the towns to vote by post, unless they believed that women were so childish and so absolutely unfit that they should not be allowed to vote at all. If women were quite as intelligent and quite as capable of forming a good judgment as men, then the argument that a justice of the peace or anybody else could persuade them to act against their judgment was all moonshine; he believed that the conduct of justices of the peace in this matter had been very much exaggerated, and he did not believe a great deal of what had been said in regard to it. He felt confident that if the amendment was embodied in the law it would act as a great deterrent to persons who might be disposed to commit abuses. He approved of the suggestion that a minimum penalty should be inserted in the Bill. Of course, if justices of the peace were manufactured for election purposes, it was easy to believe they would walk through any Act of Parliament, but his opinion was that if an ordinary justice of the peace could be trusted to commit a man for trial for murder, and to deal with other offences, he could be trusted to exercise his functions in connection with the postal vote.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The objection to the postal vote was that it was an alternative sort of voting, which enabled coercion and intimidation to be used. The proposition that a woman, being a human being obliged to obey the law and to contribute to taxation, should be entitled to a vote was irresistible, but it must be admitted

that woman was a dependent creature. She was the domestic help, the factory girl, the waitress—she was much more of a dependent creature than man, and should, therefore, be protected by the Legislature in this matter. No one would dispute that cajolement and coercion could be exercised over a respectable domestic help. There was a tendency in the female mind to look up to furs and feathers, and all that sort of thing. He thought it was in one of Disraeli's novels where he said that a gentleman who addressed the electors wore a very beautiful coat with a fur-lined collar. He said, "You know this is a very great assistance in addressing the electors. It produces a great impression." There was an indefinite something about the whole proceeding which laid women open to cajolement and coercion, and made it necessary, in order to secure purity of election, that she should go to the poll and record her vote for herself. They were not denying that some women would be excluded from recording their vote if the postal ballot was abolished.

HON. F. I. POWER: A good many of them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: How many of them? He was quite convinced that in a country town, if a circus or play arrived in the town, the women had no difficulty whatever in leaving their domestic duties and getting into town.

HON. W. H. CAMPBELL: They will dance all night and then go and milk the cows.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: He contended it was a pure canard to say that women in the country would not be able to go to the poll once in three years. Parliament usually lasted for three years, and there was very good reason why it should. Surely once in three years a woman could get away from her home for the purpose of recording a vote. Why, some women in the bush rode quite as well as men, and were prepared to ride considerable distances at election times. He was sorry to have to use what might appear an unkind expression, but he could not help saying that the whole argument which had come from the other side was humbug. It was all an attempt to prop up an alternative system of voting which could not be defended on any ground whatsoever. He was therefore entirely opposed to the amendment.

HON. T. M. HALL: Hon. gentlemen who had spoken that afternoon had covered a good deal of ground when discussing the postal vote and the remedy for the existing evils. He thought he had made his position clear on a former occasion, and he had voted against clause 2 on the ground that it curtailed a privilege which had been conferred upon women, and that it attempted to abolish that privilege after only one trial had been given to the system. It was at the last election that the first trial was given to the postal vote, and, as had already been stated, it had been used to a very small extent indeed in the country. That was easily explained by the fact that in the town centres the women voters were well coached by the different leagues as to their privileges in connection with the franchise, and also as to the method of recording their votes; consequently, a larger postal vote was cast in the cities and large centres of population. If a remedy was to be applied to the evils that had arisen, then, in his opinion, it would have been better to rectify the abuses, not by abolishing the postal vote altogether, but by abolishing it as applying to the large centres of population, and the women in

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the country districts should still retain the right to vote by post. In the absence of an amendment of that character, he was of opinion that the postal vote should be properly safeguarded so that reasonable protection should be extended to the women of the State. Had the events which had been spoken of in such horrifying language occurred on a second occasion, he should have been one of the first to move for the abolition of the postal vote, but in the ordinary affairs of life, if they found a weak spot in a structure they endeavoured to rectify it. They had found that there was a very weak spot in connection with the manipulation of the postal vote, and it was for them as reasonable men to find a remedy for the imperfections, and to put temptation out of the reach of unscrupulous persons. He would have preferred to vote for an amendment which would have curtailed the operations of those who were very active at election times by making it a criminal offence for a justice of the peace to occupy his time in going from house to house obtaining votes. He would have preferred a provision to make it incumbent on a justice of the peace when called upon by a sick person to attend and attest the vote, but on all other occasions he took it that the voter should take the trouble to go to the justice of the peace and have his vote attested. It was all very well for hon. gentlemen living in the towns to say that it was well within the power of women to attend a polling-booth once in three years. The Secretary for Public Instruction told them that these women were able to attend circuses and other entertainments, but he could assure hon. gentlemen that as a body they were not in the habit of doing so. Only certain members of the family were able to leave home for that purpose, and it was impossible for a woman to leave her domestic surroundings and the care of her children, and to travel considerable distances in order to vote. There were other physical reasons, of which hon. gentlemen were quite aware, which at times prevented women from exercising the franchise. The bogey which had been raised throughout the debate had been in connection with coercion. Now, he need not remind hon. gentleman that those who took any interest in politics in their particular electorates knew how almost every person in the district voted, and no fear was displayed by persons taking either one side or the other that it would become known how they voted. He had been actively engaged in connection with elections in his district; he had met men who were diametrically opposed to him in politics, and they had walked home together from election meetings and been very good friends. He was perfectly satisfied that the women were not ashamed to let people know for whom they were going to record their vote, and he did not believe that manhood had reached such a very low ebb that an employer would penalise his employee because he voted in a direction opposite to himself. The clause repealing the postal vote having been rejected, although he disapproved of the postal vote as it was used at the last election, yet he certainly thought some provision should be inserted to make its use open to less abuse. They had an important question to deal with, and they should apply themselves to finding a workable remedy for the evils which had been disclosed. He regretted that such a panic had been raised over certain loopholes which had been discovered in the Act. It was their duty to caulk them rather than, by abolishing that provision of the Act, prevent a great many women from voting at all. The Elections Act professed to be a democratic Act, and they had a democratic Government in power, and it would be a great mistake to wipe out of existence one of the most democratic provisions of an otherwise good Act. With

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restrictions, which he was sure the Council was quite capable of imposing, he was perfectly certain that they could safely allow the postal provisions of the Act to remain in force. He therefore proposed to vote for the amendment, which, to a certain extent, would provide for a more proper use of the postal ballot.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: They had had repeated again that afternoon the accusation against the Council of having introduced the justice of the peace into the postal vote. Well, that was so, and he was introduced for a very good reason indeed. It was recognised that if they confined the right of witnessing signatures to postal votes to schoolmasters, and just one or two exclusive classes, they would deprive a very great number of the women of the State of the right of voting at all. How were the women in the isolated localities, where there were only provisional schools presided over by young girls, to have their postal ballots witnessed? After all, there was very little moral force and very little sound argument in saying that these cases were few and far between. It did not matter how few they were, he took it that it was a principle believed in by hon. gentlemen opposite that the minority should be provided for, and that where a few people had a right that right should be protected even though there might be a great majority on the other side. Now, justices of the peace were introduced into the Act solely for the purpose of increasing the facilities for women using the postal vote where it was impossible or inconvenient for them to go to the poll and record their votes.

HON. A. HINGCHLIFFE: That is where most of the trouble came in.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL hoped hon. gentlemen would not go too far in their argument in that direction, because they all had a recollection of half a dozen justices of the peace being appointed in one town on the eve of the election, apparently for no other purpose whatever except that they might go round canvassing for postal votes, and in one big town in the North the same thing was done, and no less than five justices were appointed.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Why not?

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: Because hon. gentlemen professed not to believe in justices going round and canvassing for votes, and yet they appointed them to do that very thing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Because your crowd had got all the other justices.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: He was not objecting in the slightest degree to the appointment of justices of the peace at the proper time and for proper objects, but he contended that it was a grossly inconsistent thing for hon. gentlemen opposite to denounce justices of the peace for doing the very thing which they appointed them to do.

HON. H. TURNER: They did it for your own party.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: He was like the Secretary for Public Instruction, and proposed to follow the very good example of that hon. gentleman and pay no heed to petty interjections.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: From such a source.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: He said nothing about the source; he was referring to the interjections themselves. It was true that his side did make a very determined effort to get justices of the peace introduced into the Act, but they

did so for the express purpose of increasing the facilities for women to vote in the outlying parts of the State.

HON. C. S. MCGHIE: And you ruined the whole Act.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: And the hon. gentleman had ruined many a good thing in his time by doing the wrong thing. They all of them had done so, and probably would do so again. They might do it from inadvertence; but if the hon. gentleman meant to insinuate that there was any sinister motive in introducing justices of the peace into the Act, then he was stating what was not a fact.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I acquit you. You did not know what a power you had got.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL thought an accusation of that sort was very mean. He, and he hoped all hon. gentlemen, discharged their duties in that Chamber in the best of faith for the benefit of the community, and it was not becoming for any member of the Council to accuse them of being actuated by improper motives. No such charge had been made on his side, and if hon. gentlemen opposite were going to throw stones, they must be prepared to get something back, for they were in a glass house all the time.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: All right, but plate glass.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: There was no disposition to do anything that was either unfair or impolite either with regard to the postal vote or those who supported it. He had already said that it was not only those isolated women in outlying districts to whom the postal vote was of value, but in the most populous centres there were a great many women who could not get to the polling-booth. The repeal of the postal vote came home pretty strongly to them. He stood as an example of the effect of what some hon. gentlemen in the Chamber proposed to do, for if the Bill had been carried as it was brought in, then he and two or three other hon. gentlemen had wives who would not be able to vote at all. That was only an illustration of what would take place all over the country, and to say that one side had gained a special benefit, and that it could be proved by the return which had been called for and published, was, he thought, hardly fair. They were told that Charters Towers polled very largely through the post, but Drayton and Toowoomba also polled very largely through the post, and the results in each case were in an opposite direction.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: There are 8,000 more people on Charters Towers.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: Then, again, they were told that Townsville voted largely by means of the postal vote. Townsville was one of the places where justices of the peace were appointed shortly before the general election, and they bore a certain political colour, too. But in Gympie the vote went the other way apparently. In Ipswich there was a very strong postal vote, but the Liberals did not get in there, and in Rockhampton there was a moderate use of the postal vote.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: Who are the Liberals?

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: They were the Liberals, and the other side was the party of liberty. The party of liberty were doing all they could to deprive tyrannically a considerable section of the women of the right to vote—to deprive them of the only manner in which they could vote. Now, the Hon. Mr. Barlow made some rather

strong remarks about his side being accused of wishing to deprive the women of Queensland of their votes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That has been the charge.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: He begged the hon. gentleman's pardon. That charge had never been brought in that Chamber. What they complained about was that the Government, having passed the postal vote through Parliament, now wished to abolish it; but his side had appealed for its retention, because the abolition of it would deprive a considerable number of women of the privilege of voting. He never asked a single woman during the last general election which way she was going to vote, and he thought it would be a good thing if other hon. gentlemen could say the same thing. The action

of the parties in power who had [4.30 p.m.] carried through Parliament the essential principle of the right of every adult woman to vote, because the franchise had not been exercised by women in the exact way that they wished or expected it to be exercised, attempted to deprive that section of the community altogether of the right to vote, savoured a little bit of insincerity. If the introduction of that principle into the Elections Act Amendment Bill some two years ago was sincere, then their action in regard to the postal section of the Bill must have been insincere. It might have been introduced for some political purpose, to placate or propitiate somebody, but whether that was so or not, their action looked marvellously like insincerity at the time it was introduced. Not only would isolated women be prevented from voting if the postal provisions were abolished, but afflicted women, helpless women, women who could not get out, would be denied the franchise. It was impossible for all women to get out and go to the poll and vote, and they should, therefore, have the opportunity of voting in the alternative way—that was, by post. He was rather amused at hearing the Hon. Mr. Airey talk about "walloping the Joss." This was not a case of walloping the Joss—it was a case of killing him outright, of knocking him on the head. That was what the Hon. Mr. Airey wanted to do—he wanted to knock the postal vote on the head.

HON. P. AIREY: Hear, hear!

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: The postal vote was the hon. gentleman's idol only two years ago.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: No; it never was our idol with the justice of the peace in it.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: The hon. gentleman would not mind the postal vote now, provided he could knock the justice of the peace out of it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Oh, yes; I think he would.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: What the hon. gentleman said just now was that it was not the principle of the postal vote he objected to, but that it was to the justice of the peace as a witness to the signature of the voter.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It might run well without the justice of the peace.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: It certainly was not his side which introduced the postal vote into legislation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is true.

HON. P. AIREY: It was a Conservative Government which first put it into a Bill.

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HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: It was such a manifest principle of justice, a thing so clearly necessary, that a Government, which was called conservative, incorporated it in another Bill. They had heard the argument that women should be protected, and yet the persons who used that argument were the very persons who were going to deprive some women of the privilege or the right to vote. The object of the amendment was to protect women, and if the Secretary for Public Instruction objected to a justice of the peace acting in this matter, why did he not bring forward an amending clause, wiping out the justice of the peace as a witness, but leaving the postal vote intact? He hoped the Committee would agree to the amendment.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: When the proposal to introduce the justice of the peace as a witness was submitted on a previous occasion, he warned the Council against adopting that proposition, and mentioned a case which was brought before a Select Committee of the Federal Parliament, where an electoral association, which was called the "Flying Angels," in Melbourne, said that for £2,000 they could get 2,000 postal votes; and there was no doubt that they could do so. He also read an extract from a report signed by Mr. Lyttleton E. Groom, in which it was stated that—

The evidence adduced shows that under the present subsection advantage may be taken to destroy the free and secret exercise of the franchise. The application forms may be witnessed in blank, and these forms may be taken in numbers by agents for candidates when canvassing, and pressure brought to bear upon persons whose names are on the roll.

That was exactly what happened in Queensland. With regard to the statement that justices of the peace were appointed while an election was going on, he would point out that the Government must do the best they could to hold up their end of the log, and could not be debating whether it was a delicate matter or not to appoint one justice of the peace or half a dozen. If the other side had got all the justices of peace in their district, then the Government must appoint other justices of the peace, or else go down.

HON. A. A. DAVEY: The Hon. Mr. Hall seemed to be willing to take some steps with regard to the abolition of the postal vote, if the experience they had recently gone through had been the experience of a second election instead of the first election under the postal vote. That showed a lack of knowledge on the part of the hon. gentleman in regard to the ways of political engineers. Candidates at the last election did not fully understand what sort of a weapon they had in their hands in the postal vote, but they now understood the possibilities of that vote, and if the next election took place under that system it would afford an example of corruption such as had never been witnessed hitherto in this State. With regard to the statement of Mr. Brentnall that his wife and other ladies in a similar condition would be unable to exercise the franchise unless they could vote by post, he was sure that every hon. gentleman sympathised with the Hon. Mr. Brentnall in that matter; but no matter how complete might be their system of voting, it was impossible that every individual who was legally qualified to vote would be in a position to exercise the franchise at any election. The sincerity of the Government in introducing democratic legislation in regard to the franchise could not be doubted for one moment, but, in view of the abuses of the postal vote which had taken place at the last election, and in view of the fact that on serious consideration there appeared to be no possible means by which the

purity of the postal vote could be safeguarded, there could be no harm in wiping it out altogether. The postal vote did not exist in any other State of the Commonwealth, and yet there did not appear to be any complaint on that ground among the electors of the other States. With regard to the statement that many women were not able to get to the polling-booth, he believed that the majority of the women in this State could get to the polling-booth, and that they would rather exercise the franchise in that way than under the postal vote system. Women had realised at the last election that undue pressure might be brought to bear upon them by employers upon whom they or their husbands were dependent for work. Employers throughout the State were, as a rule, above doing anything of that kind, but there were cases in which pressure had been brought to bear by employers, and it was desirable that as few opportunities as possible should be given for the exercise of undue influence by any person. It was evident that political candidates and their agents would find means of manipulating the postal vote, so that if it was continued we should have a regular system of "Tammanism" in this country. On that ground, among others, he was absolutely opposed to the postal vote. The Hon. Mr. Brentnall stated that certain charges had been made by hon. gentlemen on that side of the Council, and in reply to those charges he said he had not heard any such statements made. If that was so, the hon. gentleman must have failed to have heard some of the remarks made by hon. gentleman with whom he was associated. But it did not seem to suit the hon. gentleman to hear everything. The same hon. gentleman made reference twice to a remark which he (Hon. Mr. Davey) was supposed to have made. He allowed it to pass on the first occasion, but on the second occasion he denied the statement imputed. If the hon. gentleman would take the trouble to turn up *Hansard*, No. 3, he would find that what he stated in denial was absolutely correct. The hon. gentleman stated that he (Hon. Mr. Davey) had said that it was better to live in a country where there was only one man for every employer, whereas what he said was that it was more desirable to reside in a country where there were ten employers looking for one man than in a country where there were 100 employees looking for one master. He was opposed to the proposed amendment because it would countenance the system of postal voting, of which he disapproved. There was nothing in the proposed amendment which was calculated to prevent the abuses which had been complained of—namely, intimidation and pressure. It certainly contained a very severe penalty, but it was one which was not likely to be enforced, and one which, he might be permitted to say, was not intended to be enforced. The difficulty was not the danger of ascertaining how an elector voted, or of disclosing that information when ascertained, but it was the exercise of undue pressure. Some hon. gentlemen had stated that they could get to know everybody's political opinions in an electorate. All he could say was that if those hon. gentlemen believed that they were very simple, because sometimes there was a great deal of dissimulation. But if that statement were true, it was rather an argument against the postal vote. What the women needed was protection against coercion, and the amendment afforded them no such protection. The system of postal voting placed an unfair weapon in the hands of the parties who had the most money. The poor candidate, who could not afford to engage a lot of agents and justices of the peace, was at a distinct disadvantage as compared with the candidate who could afford such expenditure. What they wanted to get at in an election was

[Hon. F. T. Brentnall.]

the unbiased opinion of the people, free from any undue influence or pressure from designing and scheming politicians.

HON. E. H. T. PLANT intended to vote against the amendment, because he was against the postal vote. When it was first introduced he thought it was a very good thing, but, after the trial it had had, it had shown that it was open to a great deal of abuse. It was mentioned by one hon. gentleman that the Government could not have been sincere in bringing in the postal vote, but he saw no force in that argument, because the Government were just as sincere now in saying that the postal vote was a failure, that it was badly abused, and that it should be cut out altogether. It seemed impossible to so amend it that it would not be open to abuse. As far as the women were concerned, he did not think the majority of them wanted the postal vote. They would rather be placed on the same basis as men in that respect. Their votes were of the same value, and they did not want any special privileges in order to entice them to record their vote. They would go to the poll just as freely as men, and at times the difficulty of attending the poll was just as great with men as it was with women. There were many men who, for various reasons, could not go to the poll, and no doubt there were women also who would not be able to record their vote, but there was nothing in the argument that women could not go there because they had to attend to their children and other domestic duties. Women could always find opportunities if they wished to go to town, and they could always find someone to take charge of their affairs for a short time in order to enable them to go and record their votes. They found no difficulty in going to town when they wished to attend entertainments, and at election times they were only too pleased, in many cases, to have an excuse for going to town. He was sure that women would be better satisfied to take up the same position as men rather than being pampered by being given a special privilege to vote at their homes. Women had never complained that they could not go to the poll in connection with local government elections. It was only in the country districts where the postal vote applied in the case of local government elections, and there it had been occasionally much abused; and so long as the postal vote was in existence it would be liable to abuse. He would vote against the amendment.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR would have liked to hear from the Hon. Mr. Airey, the gentleman who introduced the Elections Act in another place, why, after the postal vote had had only one trial, there was such a sudden change of front.

HON. P. AIREY: Because it has been conclusively proved that it has been abused.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: Was that the kind of legislation that they were to expect from the hon. gentleman and his friends? Was the Act to only stand the test of one election, and then to be pronounced an absolute failure? It had always been contended by the party of which the Hon. Mr. Airey was a prominent member—although the hon. gentleman had deserted his old friends—that every man and woman of the age of twenty-one years, and every naturalised British subject, should have the franchise.

HON. A. A. DAVEY: So they have now.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: He maintained that the hon. gentleman and his friends by their action were going to prevent thousands of women from exercising the franchise. Was that giving them a vote? The Secretary for Public Instruction told them that the women of Queensland were all there to attend the circus

or theatre, and he saw no reason why they should not also attend the polling-booth. He would tell the hon. gentleman that there were thousands of women in Queensland who desired to exercise the franchise, and who never attended a circus or a theatre because they had no desire to do so. The Hon. Mr. Airey and his friends told them that at the last general election the postal ballot was seriously abused, but they had never mentioned one fact to show in what respect abuse had taken place. It was mere hearsay. It was what somebody told them at the corner of the street—that so and so took place at such and such an election, and they believed it.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: You would not have them accuse themselves.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: He would not expect that altogether. They had heard that afternoon that the women of Queensland did not take that interest in elections that they ought to take, but he thought he could prove to honourable gentlemen that there were some women in Queensland who took a very active interest in politics. He personally took a great interest in the meetings of the Women's Electoral League, and in reading the speeches of the women supporters of the Labour party, and what took place in the Trades Hall in Turbot street. He had that day received a letter from certain ladies representing the Queensland Women's Electoral League, who placed their views in regard to the repeal of the postal ballot clause in writing. The league had been very active in seeing that everything in connection with the elections was properly and faithfully

[5 p.m.] carried out, and every one of the ladies connected with the league was deeply interested in the purity of elections. Such being the case, why should honourable gentlemen opposite take such an interest in disfranchising the women of Queensland, for that that would be the effect of repealing the postal ballot no one could have any doubt. He was sure his honourable friend, Mr. Plant, whom he had known for a very long time, had no desire to do an injury to the women of Queensland. Well, he would read to the Committee what the ladies representing the Queensland Women's Electoral League said on the subject, and honourable gentlemen could then form their own conclusions—

Dear Sir.—It is with the greatest interest that the members of the Queensland Women's Electoral League have watched the progress of the Elections Act Amendment Bill in the Upper House.

The league is of opinion that if the Bill is passed in its present form a most serious injustice will be done to many of the women electors—to leave the men electors out of the question—of this State, who, through circumstances over which they have no control, have found and will again find, it impossible to attend a polling-booth to record their votes, though they are fully entitled to the right of having every facility for recording same, and have every desire to discharge their responsibility as citizens.

The league is further of opinion that an amendment should be added to the Bill providing for such facility, but framed in such a way as to preserve the secrecy of the ballot and to prevent the practice of fraud.

On behalf of the Queensland Women's Electoral League, we wish to express the heartiest thanks to you as a member of the Upper House for taking the position you did when a division on the Bill was called for, and hope that you will continue your good services whenever a division is again called for, until the assault on the postal vote clause is defeated.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Amen!

HON. H. L. GROOM: Who is that signed by?

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: If the hon. gentleman would give him time he would tell him. It was signed by Christina Corrie, president.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Oh!

Hon. J. T. Annear.]

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: She was the president of the Queensland Women's Electoral League, and a very intelligent lady, too.

HON. H. L. GROOM: No doubt.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: The other ladies were—F. M. Cliffe Mackie, vice-president; Pauline Stephens, vice-president; C. P. Britten, vice-president; Eleanor M. Little, hon. treasurer; and Margaret A. Ogg, organising secretary.

HON. H. L. GROOM: I can give the names of ladies who have done just as much as those, and who are opposed to the postal ballot.

HON. C. F. MARKS: Why do they not say so?

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: Any lady who was opposed to the postal ballot had every opportunity of making her opinions known. He could say, as the Hon. Mr. Brentnall had said, that he took some little interest in the last general election. He followed the example of his worthy and honourable friend, the Minister for Public Instruction. He thought he could do a little service for his party, which he did in one or two places, and he did not believe for a moment that the justices of the peace in Queensland, who were an honourable body of men and who had responsible duties cast upon them, had got to the low ebb which had been pictured by some hon. gentlemen during the discussion on the Bill. He believed they were quite as honourable a body of men as the postmasters, over whom the Queensland Government had no control whatever, for they were Commonwealth officers. He was going to vote for the amendment, and in doing so he believed he was doing his duty to the women of Queensland in seeing that every facility should be afforded to them for recording their votes when election day came round.

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE was entirely opposed to the amendment, just as he was opposed to the postal ballot; and he was opposed to it for very good and substantial reasons. He had said before that the moment they allowed a ballot-paper to go outside the room in which it was delivered by the returning officer to the elector they opened the door to evil possibilities, and there could be no gainsaying that statement. He did not think it possible for the Council to devise any safeguards which would shut the door against those evil possibilities. Certainly, the amendment submitted by the Hon. Mr. Brentnall did not seem to him to meet the case at all. It was another instance of Mrs. Partington's broom.

HON. F. I. POWER: What harm can it do?

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE thought that was an exceptionally poor argument. It was quite evident what harm it could do if one studied the experience of the last general election. The general feeling of the whole community was at that time that very gross irregularities had taken place.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: What did take place?

HON. F. I. POWER: They did not vote the way they were wanted to.

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: He was not opposing the amendment on that ground at all. There could be no question that the secrecy of the ballot was violated in a large number of cases during the late election. There could be no disputing the fact also that justices of the peace in some constituencies were engaged at a salary.

HON. F. I. POWER: Is there any proof of it?

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: The hon. gentleman wanted proof.

HON. F. I. POWER: I have heard it said but not substantiated.

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HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: Was the hon. gentleman prepared to deny that it was so?

HON. F. I. POWER: Yes, as far as I know.

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: He was satisfied from the information which he had—

HON. F. I. POWER: Give us your information.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: I did not know anything of the sort.

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: It was notorious that some justices of the peace went round and carried a little piece of blotting-paper with them for the purpose of taking an impress of the signatures, and they renewed that piece of blotting-paper as occasion required.

HON. F. I. POWER: Where was this?

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: In some electorates not far removed from the hon. gentleman's district.

HON. F. I. POWER: I never heard of it.

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: He understood on very good authority that that was so. It was also a notorious fact—and there was evidence to prove that something very much akin to forgery took place in one district—that voters who were away on their holiday had postal ballot forms supplied to them, for which they had never made any application at all, and those documents were sent through an electoral association, and not a labour association either. That kind of thing went on all through the campaign.

HON. F. I. POWER: Why were they not prosecuted?

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: Even supposing there was no forgery, he contended that it was undesirable that ballot-papers should be sent to any organisation of that kind.

HON. A. J. CALLAN: What is the use of saying things you cannot prove?

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: He had proof of it, and he would produce to the hon. gentleman documentary evidence in proof.

HON. F. I. POWER: Why were those forgers not prosecuted?

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: He knew of one case where a prosecution would have taken place, but if the party's name had been mentioned it would have meant the dismissal of her father employed in one of the mines in a certain district, and she pleaded that her name should not be used. She gave the facts, and some of the documents were in his possession.

HON. F. I. POWER: Why was she not forced?

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: He was not prepared to answer such conundrums. He was merely giving the facts.

HON. F. I. POWER: That is a charge against some mineowner.

HON. A. HINCHCLIFFE: His contention was that such things had taken place, and he could produce documentary evidence which would convince hon. gentlemen that they had taken place. He contended that no safeguard which the Council could invent would prevent the evils which were likely to arise from allowing ballot-papers to go out of the room in which they were delivered by the returning officer to the elector. The Hon. Mr. Annear had read a letter from estimable ladies expressing their sympathy with the attempt to prevent the elimination of the postal vote provisions from the Electoral Act. There were other ladies, equally intelligent and equally energetic, representing another important organisation, who had waited upon the Premier, and thanked the Government very heartily for taking immediate steps to remove what they believed was an interference with the secrecy of the

ballot and the purity of elections. He mentioned this fact merely by way of rejoinder to the statement which the hon. gentleman had just made. With regard to the statement that the elimination of the postal vote provisions from the Act would disfranchise thousands of electors, that was all moonshine. But even at the risk of inconveniencing a number of female voters, he thought it was desirable that they should endeavour to preserve the secrecy of the ballot in every reasonable way. As had been pointed out by another hon. gentleman, in none of the other States of the Commonwealth did the system of voting by post at State elections obtain, and yet there was no outcry from the women in those States that they were disfranchised. As a matter of fact, in South Australia, at the last election but one, the percentage of women who voted was considerably larger than the percentage of male voters, and those women went to the poll to record their votes, so that there was nothing in the argument that the abolition of the postal vote would disfranchise the women. He sincerely trusted that the amendment would be rejected.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL thought he had replied to the statement of the Secretary for Instruction that hon. gentlemen on that side had asserted that hon. gentlemen opposite wished to deprive the women of Queensland of their right to vote. He said that nothing of the sort had been said throughout the whole of the debates on this Bill, and he repeated that statement now, although the Hon. Mr. Davey had repeated the allegation a few minutes previously. What hon. gentlemen on this side had said was that a considerable number of women—disabled, afflicted, isolated women—would be deprived of a vote, and that was as far as they had gone. With regard to the other matter on which the Hon. Mr. Davey seemed to be very sensitive—during the debate on the address in reply that hon. gentleman made a certain statement which he (Hon. Mr. Brentnall) immediately wrote down with pencil on a piece of paper. He had that note still. The hon. gentleman said the other day that he was misquoting him, and that if he referred to *Hansard* he would find that he was misquoting the hon. gentleman. He had referred to *Hansard*, and he found that the statement the hon. gentleman made was strictly in accordance with the *Hansard* report, but it was not strictly in accordance with the note that he (Hon. Mr. Brentnall) made at the time. How the discrepancy arose he did not know, and he could only express his regret that he must have misunderstood what the hon. gentleman said.

HON. H. TURNER: He found, on referring to *Hansard*, that in a previous debate on this measure the Hon. Mr. Thynne stated that the proposal to abolish the postal vote was made "for the express purpose of depriving women in country places of the opportunity of voting." He (Hon. Mr. Turner) had spoken to women in scattered places, and they had told him that they had no intention of voting by post, but that they intended to go to the polling-booth to record their votes. He had been asked by a large number of women electors to use his influence to knock the postal vote out altogether, because of the abuses which had occurred in connection with it at the last election. He thought the Committee should reject the amendment, and he should certainly vote against it.

HON. T. A. JOHNSON wished to give a reason for the vote that he intended to give on the amendment. He had previously voted in favour of extending the franchise to women, and he saw no reason why he should now nullify that vote by depriving a large number

of women in the State of the franchise. He believed that there were abuses of the postal vote on both sides at the last election, but he did not consider that was a sufficient reason for the abolition of the system. He saw no reason why both sides should not work together and devise such an amendment as would do away with those abuses. They had heard a great deal about coercion in the course of the debate. All he could say was that he had never known or heard of a single instance of coercion on any part of the Darling Downs, and he did not believe there was such a thing as coercion in existence, unless it was up in some of the back blocks, with which he was unacquainted. With regard to the argument that, by abolishing the postal vote, they would preserve the secrecy of the ballot, he might say that his experience of the last general election was that there were very few persons who cared a "two-penny ticket" who knew how they voted. They voted quite openly now. The time had gone by when the secrecy of the ballot was regarded as a matter of the greatest importance. People took sides in politics now, and they were not afraid to let their opponents know that they were going to vote for the other side. Secrecy might be of importance in some instances, and in those instances it should be preserved, but, generally speaking, secrecy was not of such consequence as some people seemed to imagine. Women were just beginning to appreciate their privileges, and it would be a pity to deprive them of their votes in any way. In some of the backblocks, where women could not leave their little children in order to travel miles to a polling-booth, it would be a great hardship to prevent them voting by post. He believed that a large number of women would be deprived of the franchise if the postal vote were abolished, and, as it would be contrary to democratic principles to deprive any person of the franchise, he could not favour any such proposal. His opinion was that if the amendment were adopted no bench of magistrates before whom a person was convicted of any of the offences specified would let that person off without imprisonment for a certain period.

HON. H. TURNER: How are you going to prove the offence?

HON. T. A. JOHNSON: How could they prove anything? Surely we were not getting so depraved as a people that we could not get persons to give evidence against a man committing an offence against the law. He should like to see a minimum term of imprisonment mentioned in the amendment, as he believed it would have a deterrent effect upon any person who was disposed to do an injustice or a wrong at an election. From statements which had been made during the discussion that afternoon it would seem that in most instances the present Government were the winners by the postal vote. Therefore, there was no reason why this matter should be made a party question, and, acting upon the broad principle that they should not disfranchise anybody, he should vote for the amendment.

Question—That the proposed new clause (*Mr. Thynne's*) stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided:—

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Hon. J. T. Annear	Hon. T. A. Johnson
" F. T. Brentnall	C. F. Marks
" A. J. Callan	" E. D. Miles
" A. J. Carter	" B. B. Moreton
" J. Cowlishaw	" A. Norton
" T. M. Hall	" F. I. Power
" F. H. Hart	" L. Thomas

Teller: Hon. T. M. Hall.

Hon. T. A. Johnson. }

NOT-CONTENTS, 15.

Hon. P. Airey	Hon. F. McDonnell
„ A. H. Barlow	„ C. S. McGhie
„ T. C. Beirne	„ P. Murphy
„ W. H. Campbell	„ C. F. Nielson
„ A. A. Davey	„ E. H. T. Plaut
„ H. L. Groom	„ R. H. Smith
„ A. Hinchcliffe	„ H. Turner
„ M. Jensen	

Teller: Hon. R. H. Smith.

Resolved in the negative.

On clause 4—“Absent voters”—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The Government thought that that clause, in the light of their knowledge that the postal ballot had been an absolute failure, would be valuable. Even if the postal ballot provisions should remain in the Act, that clause could very well run concurrently with them. He did not think he need go into a lengthy explanation of the clause, which he had dealt with on the second reading. The provision was very clear. It provided a means whereby a voter who was absent from his electoral district would not be deprived of his vote. He thought the clause was sufficiently fenced round with protection, and he therefore had no hesitation in moving that it stand part of the Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5 to 9, inclusive, passed as printed.

On clause 10—“Amendment of sections 82 and 83”—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: He would ask hon. gentlemen to negative that clause with a view of substituting another clause providing verbal amendments which would make it run concurrently with the other alteration made in the Bill.

Clause put and negatived.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, the following clause was substituted for clause 10:—

(1) In the second paragraph of section eighty-two of the consolidated Acts as enacted by section eleven of the Elections Acts Amendment Act of 1905, after the word “postal,” wherever it occurs, the words “and absent voters” are inserted.

(2) In the third and fourth paragraphs of the said section, after the word “postal,” the words “or absent voters” are inserted.

(3) In section eighty-three of the consolidated Acts as amended by section eleven of the Elections Acts Amendment Act of 1905, after the words “certificates and applications,” the words “and declarations” are inserted.

Clauses 11 to 14, inclusive, passed as printed.

The Council resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I think I can congratulate the Council upon having done a good day's work. In moving the adjournment of the Council I may mention that forcible remarks were made by the Hon. Mr. Gibson and other hon. gentlemen as to the inconvenience experienced by hon. gentlemen in being kept in town for three days instead of two. I therefore propose, with the concurrence of a number of hon. gentlemen, that if the state of business requires it we shall sit in the evenings, and leave the Thursday sitting until we are absolutely obliged to annex it. That, I hope, will meet with the approval of the Council. Whether it will be necessary to

[Hon. A. H. Barlow.

sit in the evening to-morrow I cannot at present say—that will depend upon the progress which is made with business.

Hon. A. NORTON: Will you sit to-night?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: No; I think we have done very good work to-day. To-morrow, being private business day, we shall have the Acclimatisation Society Bill. I understand that the Hon. Mr. Thynne is in charge of this measure, and he is absent from town. Is anyone else going to take charge of the Bill?

Hon. F. T. BRENTNALL: The Hon. Mr. Thynne requested me to proceed with it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Well, we will proceed with that Bill to-morrow. That may be slightly contentious. After that we will take the resumption of the debate on the second reading of the Wages Boards Bill, then the second reading of the Children's Courts Bill, and after that the second reading of the Poor Prisoners' Defence Bill. I beg to move that the Council do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

The Council adjourned at thirteen minutes to 6 o'clock.