

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 12 AUGUST 1913

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 12 AUGUST, 1913.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. D. Armstrong, *Lockyer*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following paper from the Auditor-General:—

Report on Government Savings Bank securities held in London on 1st July, 1913.

Ordered to be printed.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Bulimba*) laid on the table the eighteenth annual report of the Auditor-General on the Supreme Court fund.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table, were ordered to be printed:—

Annual report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the year 1912.

Return to an Order relative to contributions to the police superannuation fund, made by the House, on the motion of Mr. Kirwan, on the 29th July.

Return to an Order relative to absentee votes in each electorate of the State, made by the House, on the motion of Mr. Winstanley, on the 23rd July.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH LAND SALES BILL.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

The TREASURER, as chairman of the Select Committee, brought up the report of the committee on this Bill, and moved that it be printed.

Question put and passed.

The second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Thursday, 21st August.

QUESTION.

BONUS ON QUEENSLAND COTTON.

Mr. HUNTER (*Maranoa*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

“1. Has he approached the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth with a view to obtain a bonus to assist in the growth and manufacture of cotton in Queensland?”

“2. If not, is it his intention to do so?”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. J. White, *Musgrave*) replied—

“1. No; but there is already a bounty upon ginned cotton.

“2. This is receiving consideration, and will be laid before the Interstate Commission.”

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. J. W. Blair, Ipswich), it was formally resolved—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to amend the Criminal Code by establishing a court of criminal appeal and making better provision for appeals in criminal cases, and for other purposes incidental to the aforesaid objects."

MINERS' HOMESTEAD LEASES BILL.

INITIATION.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. G. Appel, *Albert*) in moving—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to amend the law relating to miners' homestead leases."

said: I have to thank the leader of the Opposition, who called "Not formal" to this motion, for giving me an opportunity of giving a brief outline of this measure, which is of considerable importance to those who are resident upon goldfield areas, proposing, as it does, to effect several material alterations so far as the tenures and the provisions in connection with miners' homestead leases are concerned. The Bill itself is divided into three parts or chapters; and Part II. is divided into four divisions. Part I. contains the usual preliminary provisions, interpretations, and definitions, and also provisions as to existing rights which have been acquired under present legislation, and also repeals. Part II. deals with miners' homestead leases. Division 1 of this part contains power to grant leases, and deals with the area of land that may be leased. The maximum area may be 640 acres. This maximum may be proclaimed by the Governor in Council to be the maximum on a field. It need not necessarily apply to the whole of the field, but simply to a portion which may be recommended by the warden. As in the case of areas of 20 acres, it must be situated at least 1 mile from the nearest boundary of a city or town. Provisions are also contained in the Bill regulating the shape and frontage which those leases may have to any creek or other natural boundary. Division 2 of this part deals with land available for application, the method of making application, and administrative details, and the power of the warden in respect to approving or rejecting applications. Division 3 embodies a new principle in respect of homestead leases—the making available of these lands or leases either by tender or by public auction. This follows the legislation of the present Land Act, but it will only be applicable to persons who are qualified—namely, those who are resident within the goldfield area where it is proposed that the leases will be dealt with in that manner, and then this course will be adopted only when the warden has made a recommendation to that effect. A further important departure is made in connection with all leases which exceed 20 acres in area. In connection with

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these leases, it will be a condition that the lessee must, within six months, effect the improvements which are specified in the Bill. Furthermore, it will be necessary that he continuously and bona fide resides upon the leasehold, or that an agent, who is likewise a qualified person, carries out the residence conditions for him. Another important provision is, that the leasehold must be kept clear of noxious weeds. Part III. consists of general provisions, which deal with the subletting of these leases, transfers, subdivisions, and the mortgaging of same, and also contains the necessary protection for any advances which may have been made by the Agricultural Bank. It also contains provisions as to forfeiture for the following reasons:—fraud, breach of conditions, and non-payment of rent; likewise administrative details in connection therewith, preservation of the rights of miners, protection of miners' improvements, resumptions, and compensation thereof, compensation to lessees; and it is also provided that the Fencing Act shall apply in connection with these leases. There are also provisions for transmission in case of death, and power to make regulations, and the schedules.

Mr. GRANT: Is there anything about residence areas?

Question put and passed.

ELECTIONS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. KESSELL (*Port Curtis*): I suppose every hon. member will feel, as the leader of the Opposition felt, that this Bill, from some standpoints, is the most important Bill introduced this session. It is not a Bill to favour hon. members sitting on the left or hon. members sitting on the right. It is an attempt by the Government of the day to place on the statute-book a Bill to give effect to a great principle of this party. It is a Bill to give equal opportunities to all and preference to none, and that is one of the basic principles of Liberalism in Australia. Those of us who were privileged to listen to the hon. the Home Secretary, in introducing this Bill, must have been struck by the clear way in which he put its provisions before the House. And those who heard the speech of the leader of the Opposition when he put his views before the House must have been struck by the appeal to passion that characterised his remarks. It seems to me a pity that a matter like this cannot be discussed free from politics and free from those lamentable exhibitions which are evidence of the worst passions that are in men. It is a pity that the old cry of the poor down-trodden working man should have been dragged up again. The leader of the Opposition said that he had not the slightest doubt that the members on this side of the House would in their remarks speak solely on the sick women's vote. As a member who follows the hon. and learned leader of the Opposition, I shall have something to say about giving sick women a vote, for I hope the day will never dawn when any member of this party will be so neglectful as to forget women who are unfortunately laid aside by illness when such an important matter as this comes before the House. I must say it comes with very bad taste indeed from the leader of the party opposite, which was under such a heavy obligation to women in the Brisbane strike, when

they placed the women between them and the policemen's batons, reminding us of the very apt verse in the "Courier"—

"They only filled the highest jobs,

And drew the biggest pay;

But they crept behind the women,

When the police got in the way."

It is a pity that any hon. member opposite should do anything to retard women from having a vote. As we all know, the objections of hon. members opposite to this Bill are not that it narrows the franchise, not that it reduces the number of persons on the roll, but that it increases the number on the roll by giving the genuine Liberals a vote. The great object of this Bill, I take it, is that the women who live in the country shall be able to record their votes. And why is it that there is such a strong objection on the other side of the House to allow these women to have a vote—women who in many cases are practically sacrificing every attraction that life can offer, and following their husbands into the interior of this State, and doing so much to make Queensland what it is—these women who have gone out to the backblocks and have stood nobly by their husbands and given Queensland to-day some of her brightest and best citizens? Why is it that these people who have done so much to build up Queensland should not have a vote? I say that if by giving the women of Queensland a vote in the far-out settlements we have to a certain extent—as a matter of fact, we have not—but if we had to a certain extent to lessen the safeguards of the franchise for their sake, I would be prepared to do it. But the Bill introduced by the Home Secretary does not attempt to do that. On the other hand, while we have this strong objection to giving the women in the country a vote, we have the hon. and learned leader of the Opposition making a tremendous song about 300 shearers, able-bodied men—and, by the way, he referred to it as a nomadic vote.

Mr. BOWMAN: Are they not entitled to a vote?

Mr. KESSELL: Certainly they are entitled to a vote, but why should you burden one particular electorate with a nomadic vote? I would like that question answered by some hon. member opposite when they get up to speak. Why should we burden one particular electorate with the shearing vote? The shearers are able-bodied men, and, as a matter of fact, a great many of them are not genuine settlers or residents of the State at all. In the shearing season they come from other States.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Some of them come from New South Wales.

Mr. KESSELL: Yes, in the old days they travelled from New Zealand and other parts of Australia. Why is it that the only interest that hon. members opposite have is for the shearers' vote?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Silence.

The HOME SECRETARY: There is no answer to it.

Mr. KESSELL: Is it that they are afraid of the genuine country vote, well knowing that it matters nothing what restrictions they place on the people who vote for this side? Members on the other side do not want a genuine vote of the electors. They do not want the voice of the settlers, which invariably goes against them. What they want is that the franchise shall be so restricted that only the people who vote the socialist ticket shall receive a vote.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KESSELL: There is not the slightest doubt of that. The leader of the Opposition said that this Bill was to narrow the franchise and lessen the number on the roll; but it is to broaden the franchise and to lessen the chance of crooked voting. This measure, I take it, is to clear the rolls, purify the ballot system, and improve the system of voting so that we shall have better means of ascertaining the voice of the people. We all admit that abuses occurred under the old system of postal voting. Neither side had a monopoly. I know that in one case in my electorate, before I got into politics, a justice of the peace witnessed some dozen signatures at a place about 80 miles from Gladstone. To my knowledge, those men had not been in Gladstone for over two months before the election, nor had that justice been out of it. I have no doubt that hon. members opposite could give some instances something like that against us, but if an Act of Parliament is faulty, are we not here to rectify that? Have we not the intelligence here to improve the law? I take it that our duty is to make bad laws good and good laws better, and, if we cannot do that, then I think the best thing we can do is to go out of the House. What hon. members opposite want is the go-as-you-please system of voting, and go-as-often-as-you-please, too. (Government laughter.)

Mr. BOWMAN: Speak for yourself.

Mr. KESSELL: A go-as-you-please system, and the oftener you go the better they will be pleased.

Mr. BARBER: That is a deliberate untruth.

The HOME SECRETARY: What about the opening of graves? (Laughter.)

Mr. KESSELL: The Right Hon. Andrew Fisher, squire of Oakleigh Hall, said that the postal vote was the natural corollary of any electoral system.

Mr. BOWMAN: Did his Government not repeal it?

Mr. KESSELL: They did so many foolish things that I cannot tell if they did that particular one. With the knowledge we have of the past, under the old Act, is it not possible that we should restore to these deserving people in the country the vote which they prize so much, and which they use so intelligently? I think the wish of every hon. member of this House is to safeguard the postal vote as much as possible. Let us have as broad a franchise as possible. If by widening the franchise and reducing abuses—and I think we have enough intelligence here to do that—we can improve our electoral system, I think we should do it by all means. The hon. and learned leader of the Opposition said that his party believed in amendments in the electoral law. He did not tell us any of them. He took the political rag-bag and threw out all the shreds and patches; there was not one solid argument in his speech. I did a very foolish thing. I listened to him; and, of course, we all have pleasure in listening to the hon. gentleman, as his words come out with a fine roll, and he makes up in noise what he lacks in argument.

Mr. BERTRAM: There is neither noise nor argument in your remarks. (Laughter.)

Mr. KESSELL: If the hon. gentleman believes in amendments of the electoral law, why did he not mention some? I listened

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to his speech, and then, after I got away from the charm of his personality, I read it twice. I read it this morning to try to find something in the Bill that he had commended, but, with the exception that he agreed with the system of voting by means of a cross instead of crossing out the name of the candidate, I found nothing. Well, if I am any judge of the remarks of that hon. member, he wants to sacrifice electoral purity for political expediency. He wants to do anything to come across the floor of this House from the place which he permanently occupies to capture the Treasury benches; and he says, "Stop these country Liberals from voting." Now, as all hon. members know, Port Curtis is a very old settled electorate. There are some hundreds of aged settlers there who take a keen and intelligent interest in all the affairs of this country. It is impossible for them to drive 15 or 20 miles, as some of them have to do, to record their votes, and they feel keenly, especially the aged women, being deprived of a say in the affairs of the country, in the making of which they have had so much to do. They felt very keenly when they were not allowed to record their votes by post. There are hundreds of dairy farmers in that electorate. We will take, for instance, a case of a farmer with a wife and three or four or five children, who live a long distance from a polling-booth. It is absolutely impossible for them to drive to the poll, and it generally ends in the husband's coming into the poll, and the wife's vote is lost. And what is the absent vote? When one comes to look at it, he finds that it is really an "absentee vote." I will just give one case in point to explain it. In the first Port Curtis election in which I was interested there were seventy odd absent votes from Many Peaks. Those men lost their positions just after the strike. They were in Many Peaks for a few months—just long enough to enable them to get on to the roll. They had not the slightest interest in the district; they left it never to return, and they never intended to return, and yet they recorded their votes by means of the absent vote as against the genuine settlers. I say that the postal vote is the genuine voice of the true settlers in the electorate. The absent vote, on the other hand, is what these hon. gentlemen opposite are always talking about. It is an absentee vote. Men who leave an electorate rarely have much interest in it, very often intend never to return, and do not care what happens to that particular electorate, are enabled to vote by it. Now I am going to touch on a matter about which I think it will be concluded I am quite competent to have some say. But before I go into it, I would like the hon. and learned leader of the Opposition to remember that he promised me twenty minutes on this Bill. So far as I am concerned, I am very pleased to see him back in his place in this Chamber again—to see that he can leave his professional duties to come here and attend to his parliamentary duties—sometimes. The hon. gentleman promised me twenty minutes on the Electoral Bill. Why did the hon. and learned gentleman not give me five minutes? I told him I would be satisfied with that. The only answer to that question is that he lacked the courage to do it. I

[4 p.m.] notice that he is silent. I say here on the floor of this House that the only reason why the leader of the

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Opposition did not give me five minutes and give the history of the Elections Tribunal, as far as I am concerned, was that he lacked the courage to do it.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

Mr. KESSELL: I will say further; I now give him absolute liberty to give his version of my history in connection with the Elections Tribunal on condition that I am given a like privilege. One hon. member, speaking on the Address in Reply in connection with the Elections Tribunal, said in reference to my remarks that they were neither honest nor honourable. The only remark I made was that the Elections Tribunal vote degenerated into a party vote. Every man who knows anything about it knows that that is an absolute fact. Members of the Opposition got up, and in various forms of Billingsgate abused me for saying that which every one of them knew was absolutely true. One hon. member who said that, curiously enough, was one of those who passed a party vote.

Mr. BERTEAM: It was a member of your own side.

Mr. KESSELL: It was a member of my own side, and also a member of the opposite side. The hon. member for Wide Bay paired with the hon. member for Mitchell on the Elections Tribunal. If two members pair in this House, we know that one is voting for and one against a motion. These gentlemen were sworn to give a verdict according to the evidence. What can we think of these gentlemen who gave a verdict before they heard the evidence? Both of these gentlemen did that. One of them said, "I am voting for Kessell," and the other, "I am voting for Breslin," and they got up and left the court without hearing what was said.

Mr. WALKER: They paired on an understanding.

Mr. KESSELL: There was something worse than that happened. One of the hon. members representing the other side of the House again paired with a member on this side, and by some unfortunate oversight he forgot it. He came to the court in the afternoon, and, but for the fact that the two members on this side of the House objected about it to the judge, he would have sat there and have made an uneven tribunal.

Mr. COYNE: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in attributing the motive that he has to hon. members of this House on both sides—imputing that they are dishonourable men and acted dishonourably in connection with a certain matter?

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. As far as I can discern the argument which the hon. member for Port Curtis has advanced to the House, he is using it in a general way.

Mr. COYNE: No; he is dealing with the Elections Tribunal.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Port Curtis is in order.

Mr. KESSELL: I can quite understand that in dealing with a matter like this I may say something that does not meet with the views of hon. members opposite, but I have yet to learn that I am bound to say anything that suits them. I am personally responsible for the way I vote, and any votes I pass are passed by me as a free man. I

am not here to say what hon. members opposite like; I am here to say what I think. They abused me to no end, but I am not going to descend to their level. (Opposition laughter.) The voting in connection with the Elections Tribunal degenerates into a party vote, and it did so as far as I was concerned; there is not the slightest doubt about that, and any man in his senses knows it is a fact. It is no use hon. members opposite getting up and raising all sorts of silly objections to what I say. They can say what they like about me—they make the most idiotic statements—but nothing can get over that fact, and as usual, when they are up against a solid fact, down they come. I hope that this particular section of the Elections Tribunal Act will be knocked out, and that there will be no such thing as any member of this House sitting again on an elections tribunal. I say it is absolutely impossible for any man in this House to sit on an election case and free himself from party bias. But I say worse than that. There was one vote objected to by the other side. My barrister claimed it, and by no stretch of the imagination could that vote have been for Mr. Breslin. The only question which arose was that it was either for me or that it was informal. I want to emphasise the fact that there was no question that the opposing barrister did not claim this vote; he claimed that it was informal—there was no suggestion that it was a Breslin vote. Three members voted that it was my vote; if there was any doubt they gave me the benefit. Two members with equal rectitude—I do not question their uprightness—voted that it was informal; they gave Mr. Breslin the credit. Three members voted on my side, two voted that it was informal, and one voted for Mr. Breslin. Was that a party vote?

Mr. MACKINTOSH: Certainly it was. (Laughter.)

Mr. KESSELL: The vote was upset, and two of the assessors told the judge that unless this gentleman left the court they would leave, and the offender was removed. The judge practically ordered this man out of court, and I say it was a disgraceful thing that hon. members of this House should so prostitute the position that you, Mr. Speaker, gave them, by going to that tribunal and casting absolutely party and biased votes. I have now finished with that part of the subject. I have had this on my mind for some weeks. (Opposition laughter.) Hon. members know this, and I have not got all off my mind that is there yet.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Throw it off.

Mr. KESSELL: No; that is quite enough in connection with this matter. I hope that this democratic measure which has been submitted by the Home Secretary will pass the House, with one or two slight amendments which we are practically all agreed on. I hope it will pass the House so that Queensland can at last hear in unmistakable terms what the people want. When the country electors and the city electors vote, the trouble will be that we shall come back with too large a number—with the opposite benches so depleted that, poor as their arguments are now, weak as they put their case now, it will be weaker still—when they can spare time to attend to the interests of this House. As I said just now, I was glad to see the learned leader of the Opposition back in his place, for which he gets £800 a year—

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No.

Mr. KESSELL: He has £500 and £300.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No; £500 altogether.

Mr. KESSELL: Well, I beg his pardon—for which he gets £500 a year. It is a mistake for an hon. member to refer personally to any other hon. member, but it was said that I was the most unpopular member on this side of the Chamber.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear! (Laughter.)

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: You are not.

Mr. KESSELL: The leader of the Opposition said I was the most unpopular member on this side of the Chamber. I am at least a member on this side of the Chamber, but the hon. gentleman twice unsuccessfully tried to get here, and was twice ignominiously turned down. He twice tried to get on this side of the House, but the electors would not touch him with a 40-foot pole. I am here by the voice of the people; but the hon. gentleman, after twice failing to get on this side, went to that refuge for the politically destitute—the socialistic side.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: That is a lie.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the leader of the Opposition to withdraw that expression.

Mr. RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the word, as it is unparliamentary.

Mr. KESSELL: Perhaps it is necessary for me to repeat that remark—that the hon. gentleman has essayed twice to be a member on this side.

The SPEAKER: Order! I suggest to the hon. member that he does not repeat that remark.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KESSELL: I will try to follow the thread of my argument.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: You have lost your thread.

Mr. KESSELL: Unfortunately, the needle at the end of the thread is what troubles hon. members opposite.

Mr. KIRWAN: The Premier repudiated you in this House.

Mr. KESSELL: I may be an unpopular member of this House—

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: But you are not.

Mr. KESSELL: But I have yet to learn that it is a case of "Call me Bill," or "Call me Tom," before you are popular. The only stamp of popularity you require here is adherence to principle—not lip service to any party shibboleth. The only brand of popularity I ever aspire to is the trust of my party. I am not put in any position in this party to keep me straight. Some members are put as leaders in their party, otherwise they have no chance of going straight—that is why they are put there. Any position to which I may attain in the future in this party I will get by straight going; not because I am a political acrobat, but because I go along the broad straight paths of Liberalism in which every true man has equal chances of rising, and in which there is equal opportunity to all.

Mr. BERTRAM: Provided you can buy the other fellow out.

Mr. KESSELL: Fancy an hon. member on that side saying that a man can be

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bought out! It is a dreadful thing to say that on the floor of this House—to admit that each man has a price. No man in this party has a price. I belong to a party that cannot be bought. It is unnecessary to be a tumbler here as in a circus. I hope that this Bill will soon be passed through the House, and that it will be placed on the statute-book free from any herassing strictures, so that when members come before the electors of this State they will be able to vote in an untrammelled way.

Mr. MAY (*Flinders*): I wish to make a few remarks on this Bill before it passes its second reading. I am rather surprised at the speech delivered by the hon. member for Port Curtis this afternoon. Previously, when he has spoken in this Chamber, he has given us a little bit of vim, but I suppose that was because he received interjections from members which helped him to put a little life into the debate. On this occasion, however, his remarks were like stale soda water—they had no “pop” in them at all, and just poured out flat. Since the hon. member has been in the House, we have not had anything so drastic from him as we have had this afternoon. The hon. member's remarks on this Bill, in reply to the leader of the Opposition, have been very weak indeed, and he made an accusation which was quite unworthy for any hon. member to make. Still, we must take it from whence it came. The hon. member then went on to refer to the elections tribunals. I happened to be a member of an elections tribunal some years ago, and I can say that my actions when I was sitting on that tribunal were in the direction of doing justice, no matter whether the candidate was a member of my own side or a member of the other side. As a matter of fact, during the whole of the deliberations my colleagues thought I was a little bit more in favour of the other fellow. However, I stood my ground, and I gave a decision according to what I thought was right and just. I hope that there will be some other method of dealing with elections tribunal proceedings than what we have had in the past. I hope that members of this House will not be put on as assessors at elections tribunals at any future hearing; but, if members are put on, I am sure that they will do their duty, and not deserve calumny from members who have just managed to get into this House by the skin of their teeth. The hon. member spoke about the absentee vote. I think it is very wrong indeed to eliminate the absentee vote from this Bill. The hon. member for Port Curtis spoke in a deprecating tone about the shearers. That includes both shearers and shed hands. I know these men very well, and they move about with their wives and families to various electorates, and they will have no opportunity of recording their votes unless they are granted an absentee vote. I consider that the absentee vote is one of the best provisions ever enacted in an Elections Act, because it gives all the nomadic workers of Queensland a chance of recording their votes. We know that there must be a lot of these nomads in Queensland, especially in the back country, as the very nature of their calling makes them so. I hope that before the Bill goes through we will be enabled to have an absentee vote included in its provisions. I hope members on both sides will give a conscientious vote, so far as restoring the absentee vote is concerned. I hope that

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they will not be brought to heel when it comes to a vote, and I hope that they will not be so hidebound as to refuse to restore the absentee vote. It is only by retaining the absentee vote in the Bill that it will be possible for every elector in the State to record his vote. There is a provision in the Bill to restore the old postal vote. We know the abuse that the postal vote met with in the past, and we know that it was decided by this House to abolish that form of voting altogether. Seeing that it is only a few short years since the postal vote was knocked out of our electoral system, it is scarcely reasonable to ask us again to place it on the statute-book. It has not been found necessary to have the postal vote restored, and, if it is re-enacted, it will be inflicting a very great injustice on a large number of people. It will bring about that very same intimidation which was experienced before. Whilst times are good it does not matter very much, but when times are bad employers can intimidate their employees and make them vote how they like. That is not a true reflex of the opinion of the people, and members should not be returned to the House on votes given in that way. I hope that the postal vote will be eliminated from our electoral laws for ever. With regard to the number of questions that a man has to answer when he applies to get his name on the roll, it is a wonder that the Home Secretary did not ask us to bring in our family tree. It is a wonder that he did not ask us to bring in the names of our ancestors for the last five or six generations.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am sure that you could do that, John. (Laughter.)

Mr. MAY: I have no doubt I could; and I have no doubt you could, too. An hon. member over here suggests to me that we might have to go back to the time of Adam and Eve, but I think if we go back to the time of Noah, it will be far enough. (Laughter.) I think there are a great many ridiculous questions that an applicant is asked, and they should be eliminated. We shall be able to deal with them when we get to the Committee stage. I just wish to enter my protest against what has been said about the shearers and shed hands, because they are a worthy class of men. There are also a good many miners who move about with their families, and when election time comes along, if they are not allowed to vote as absent voters, they will be deprived of their votes altogether. However, we shall be able to deal with all those matters when we get into Committee.

Mr. BOOKER (*Wile Bay*): I rise this early in the debate in order to follow as closely as I can the hon. member for Port Curtis. I quite assumed, when the matter that was discussed this afternoon was discussed on the Address in Reply, that that was the last we would hear of it. I regret very much that the incident should have cropped up again in this debate. I think it is due to myself, and it is also due to the hon. member for Mitchell, that I should state what really took place on the occasion of my absence from the elections tribunal proceedings when the Port Curtis case was being dealt with. My friend, the hon. member for Cooroora, Mr. Walker, knew that I was very anxious to get away, as I had some very important business to attend to. Mr. Walker understood the position, and he said to me, “I believe I can arrange a pair for you.” I thanked him,

and I accepted the fact that the hon. member for Mitchell (Mr. Payne), and myself had paired. The hon. member for Mitchell did not quite clearly understand the case, and I accepted what he said then just as it took place. It was no fault of the hon. member for Mitchell, and I may also assume that it was no fault of my own that I was not present on that particular occasion. I accepted the pair then, just as I would accept a pair in the division on this Bill. I was not there, and the hon. member for Mitchell quite explained his position. So far as recording a party vote was concerned, I can say quite emphatically that the member who was sitting on my left on the occasion of those proceedings discussed each question with me as it arose, and he cast each vote just as I did myself, without any party considerations at all. I know that the question of party did not enter into the matter at all so far as I was concerned, and I think I can speak the same for the other members of the tribunal just as I speak for myself. (Hear, hear!) I think it ill-becomes an hon. member of this House to say what the hon. member for Port Curtis said this afternoon. It is undignified, and it brings the Chamber into disrepute. There are people in the Chamber who are not members of Parliament, and when they hear these utterances—these remarks will also be recorded in the Press—they will only come to one conclusion, which will not be for the good of Parliament. I understand that the assessors were selected by you, Mr. Speaker, so that the remarks of the hon. member were a reflection on yourself, upon the men who were called upon to undertake the duty at the Elections Tribunal, and also upon the spirit of Parliament, and I resent them.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BOOKER: I have finished with this matter, and I trust that it will not be referred to at any other sitting in this Chamber. Dealing with the measure itself, I take this view: It is the desire of every public man, and every member of Parliament, that the machinery of our elections should be as perfect as possible and as equitable as possible, so far as the different shades of political opinion are concerned.

Both OPPOSITION and GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BOOKER: The Home Secretary put the case very well when he said that it should be the endeavour of the Elections Act to enable every adult person in the State to have their names recorded and the machinery provided to enable every adult to record a vote, and this Bill is an aim in that direction. No one can say that the intention is not to give the privilege to every adult person to become enrolled, but I think we should as a State authority do our best to fall into line with the Federal electoral authorities, and have our systems as uniform as possible. (Hear, hear!) We should make provision for the two electoral departments to work together as closely as possible. After all, the issues of the two systems are identical, so far as returning men to represent public opinion is concerned. This is how it has appeared to me: There are ten Federal constituencies in Queensland, and in those areas are included a number of State electorates. I suggest as a means to bring about the best results, so far as having people enrolled, that we should divide the State of Queensland into ten electoral areas. We should then have an amalgamation of the State and Federal officers, and the State and Federal Governments should collaborate and

appoint an officer to represent each of those ten areas. Whenever any overlapping occurs, so far as a State electorate overlapping a Federal electorate is concerned, they could appoint a permanent officer to deal with those State areas not inside the Federal areas, and to deal with the two sets of rolls. The man who is permanently appointed, and who should have no other work to do, will be fully occupied. He will have what is very necessary—that is, a local knowledge of the electorates. Where we fail so much at the present time is where the Government place the work in the hands of a police magistrate or a clerk of petty sessions or some other Government officer, whose time is so much occupied with other business that he can give very little time to the electoral portion of his duty. That is where we fail, in not having rolls which are a true reflex of the people who are in the State. There is something very grossly wrong in the State of our electoral rolls. I understand that there are something like 170,000 names on the electoral rolls of Australia over and above the adult population of Australia. We in Queensland have our proportion of the surplus votes, including names which are either duplications of names or names of imaginary persons. If we had an officer with an intimate local knowledge of the centres of population and districts generally, there would not be the same opportunity of duplication. I am quite certain that no hon. member desires that the rolls should be stuffed in any sense, but so far as the machinery of the Bill is concerned, the wish of this House should be to make the measure so perfect that after an election is held no one on that side and no one on this side can cast any reflection on the member who is returned. His return should be a clear reflex of public opinion. A public officer who is permanently employed in connection with electoral matters will know the persons who are best qualified to act as presiding officers. Very often mistakes are made in appointing as presiding officers men from the [4.30 p.m.] central executive office, the Home Secretary's Department, and they are not always qualified for the work. They have had no training, and they feel nervous on the occasion of an election. If persons trained in electoral work were appointed to such positions we should have infinitely better results than we have had in the past. With regard to the much discussed clause providing for the postal vote, I think it is a most necessary provision, and I cannot understand any hon. member who is not prejudiced in some way by party considerations having any objection to that form of voting, provided it is properly safeguarded; and, after listening to the explanation of the Home Secretary of the clause dealing with the postal vote, I take it that it will be safeguarded to such an extent that political agents, or what you might call political pimps, will not be allowed to deal with such votes. Given that the postal vote is properly safeguarded, I cannot understand any public man questioning the necessity for it, the justice of it, and the equity of it. Why should the hale, strong man have political privileges that a sick man or a sick woman does not possess? The people in the rural districts are at a disadvantage as against voters in the cities and towns, owing to the absence of the postal vote. If a farmer lives 2 miles or 3 miles from a railway, or 5 miles from a polling-booth, how can both husband and wife go to the polling-booth and record

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their votes? They cannot do so because, if they were both absent at the same time, they would have to leave their children alone at the homestead. If the husband goes away to vote by himself, when he returns it is probably too late for his wife to go to the polling-booth. If the wife can exercise the franchise by voting by post under a scheme which is properly safeguarded against the operations of the political pimp, she will have full opportunity for recording her vote. It is not usual to deal with the whole of the provisions of the Bill on the second reading, as we have ample opportunity of discussing its various clauses in Committee. I am quite certain that when the measure is discussed in Committee its general principles will be endorsed, and I shall only add, in conclusion, that in my judgment every hon. member who takes up a proper position must see the justice of the postal vote, inasmuch as it gives to the old and the ill an opportunity of exercising the franchise as well as the strong and the vigorous. (Hear, hear!)

* Mr. ADAMSON (*Rockhampton*): I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Wide Bay on the manly sentiments he has uttered in relation to an incident which took place in connection with the Elections Tribunal last year. I also was one of the assessors on that tribunal, and I know I did my best to hold the balance fair for everybody, and tried not to take any party advantage in any way. I regard the measure now before the House as a reactionary measure. I say that honestly. Just as I thought last year that the Industrial Peace Bill was a reactionary measure, so I think this Elections Bill is a reactionary measure, and I hold that the present Government will go down to posterity as a reactionary Government. What is the cause of this reaction? What is the cause for reintroducing the postal vote? What is the cause for throwing out again the absentee vote, which was only enacted a few years ago? The postal vote was cast out only a few years ago, and I should like to know what is the reason for its reintroduction now. I cannot see any just or valid reason for casting out the absentee vote or for reintroducing the postal vote. The only conclusion I can come to with regard to the matter is that the fertile imagination of the Premier, or the Home Secretary, and of other members on the opposite side of the House, suggests that it has become necessary to introduce such a measure, and that some member of the other House, whose imagination is more fertile still, has had something to do with the introduction of this Bill. It appears to me that the general lock-out last year, the result of the last State elections in the metropolitan area, and the result of the late Federal elections in Queensland have given them a sort of political nightmare, and filled them with political forebodings as far as the future of their party is concerned. The things which have been said in relation to the Federal elections have not been proved. I understand that there is an election case in Western Australia which is sub judice, and I shall not refer to it on the present occasion. I have a quotation concerning the finding of the members of the Committee of Inquiry in regard to this matter in Western Australia, but seeing that the case I have alluded to is likely to come before the Elections Tribunal, I shall say nothing about it. I must say, however, that the charges made by the Home Secretary on the floor of this House—gross charges of perjury, double voting, and all the rest of

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it—have not been proved in this House or anywhere else. The charges made by that hon. gentleman against the Labour party when he introduced this Bill and when he moved its second reading have not been substantiated. I hold that at the present time democracy in Queensland is in peril. Mr. Lloyd-George, speaking at Carnarvon recently, said that

“Democracy was in graver peril in Great Britain to-day than for generations past; a deliberate conspiracy was on foot in influential quarters to overthrow democracy and the Government.”

I am of opinion, from what took place here last session, and from what is taking place now, that there is a conspiracy in Queensland to overthrow democracy, particularly the democracy which the Labour party stands for.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSEB: It requires a great stretch of imagination to arrive at that conclusion.

Mr. ADAMSON: I think that is a fact, and I have reason for thinking so, because the postal vote was knocked out a few years ago and the absentee vote was substituted for it, and nothing has taken place since to justify the throwing out of the absentee vote and the reintroduction of the postal vote. The proposal to repeal the absentee provisions of the existing Elections Act shows that the present Government, under the malign influence of a certain gentleman in another place, has ceased to trust the people of Queensland. It would almost appear as if they are saying with Hesiod of old—

“I hate the vulgar and keep them at a distance.”

I should have thought that the Premier, at any rate, would rather have taken the advice of even a more famous man in many respects than Hesiod. I mean Charles Haddon Spurgeon. And I should have thought that the Premier would have taken his advice when he urged politicians and others to—

“Take a header into the rising tide of democracy and get near to the people of England, and they will learn to love them.”

I hold that if the Premier and the Home Secretary, and the gentleman in the other place who I think has had a great deal to do with the introduction of this Bill, would get near to the people of Queensland and learn what are their aspirations and wants, then, instead of regarding them as revolutionaries who are trying to get something which is wrong, they would find that they are men who are only seeking justice and right, and they would learn to love them and to trust them, too. The present Government seemed to mistrust the people of Queensland, and so they are seeking to disfranchise as many as possible. I would commend to the Home Secretary the wise words of James Russell Lowell when writing on democracy. Ironically he says—

“The arguments against universal suffrage are equally unanswerable. ‘What! we exclaim, shall Tom, Dick, and Harry have as much weight in the scale as I?’ Of course, nothing could be more absurd. And yet universal suffrage has not been the instrument of greater un wisdom than contrivances of a more select description. Assemblies could be mentioned composed entirely of masters of arts and doctors of divinity which have sometimes shown traces of human

passion or prejudice in their votes. Have the serene highnesses and enlightened classes carried on the business of mankind so well, then, that there is no use trying a less costly method? The democratic theory is that those constitutions are likely to prove the steadiest which have the broadest base, that the right to vote makes a safety-valve of every voter, and that the best way of teaching a man how to vote is to give him the chance to practise. For the question is no longer the academic one, 'Is it wise to give every man the ballot?' but rather the practical one, 'Is it prudent to deprive whole classes of it any longer?' It may be conjectured that it is cheaper in the long run to lift men up than to hold them down, and that the ballot in their hands is less dangerous to society than a sense of wrong in their heads."

The classes out West—the shearing classes who are talked about as nomads, the men who were referred to this afternoon in a sneering way, the men who have borne the heat and burden of the day in the West, and have assisted to produce our national wealth—should have a chance to record their votes just as other members of the community have a chance to exercise the franchise. Members on this side are just as anxious as hon. members opposite that the women voters should be afforded every facility for voting, but we want to prevent corruption as far as women's votes are concerned. Abraham Lincoln once said—

"Democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people."

And Theodore Parker said on one occasion—

"Democracy meant, not 'I'm as good as you are,' but 'You're as good as I am.'"

That is not how members on the other side seem to regard the working classes in Queensland. They do not say, "You are as good as I am," as is evident from their action in seeking to disfranchise as many of them as possible. John Morley, in reviewing Hobhouse's book, "Democracy and Reaction," says—

"We need not, however, go to conservative heroes either at home or abroad for proof that liberal or democrat are not identical or coextensive terms. In more than one time and land the formula of liberalism has been, 'Everything for the people, nothing by the people.'"

I hold that these words are applicable to the present Government of Queensland, who have ceased to trust the great masses of the people. They say they want to do everything for the people; but they do not want to do anything by the people; they do not want the people to do things for themselves, and that is the reason why this reactionary measure is submitted to the House. The proposals of this Bill are utterly opposed to the spirit of the times. The tendency of to-day amongst the most progressive nations of the world is, not to restrict the franchise, but to extend it; not to curtail the powers of the people, but to increase them; not to take the names of people off the roll, but to put as many on as possible, and to keep them on. Instead of that, it would appear that the Government at the present time are anxious to take off as many electors from the rolls as possible and to keep off as many

as possible. It strikes me that this is the reason for their doing away with the absentee vote. If this Bill contained provisions for the initiative and referendum it would have been more in harmony with the spirit of the times. When you go to Switzerland or to America the tendency is in the direction of legislation to secure more facilities for learning the wishes of the people. Mr. William Sharp McKecknie in his new book, "The New Democracy and the Constitution," says: "It is to democratic Switzerland rather than to democratic America that Great Britain, now that her old constitutional bulwarks have decayed, seems to be turning in search of new ones. The great merit claimed for the referendum is that it is thoroughly democratic in its tendencies and results. The more extensively the referendum is resorted to, the more complete will be the triumph of democracy. In Switzerland the sphere of the referendum has not only been extended steadily, but it has brought in its train that potent engine of democracy known as the 'Initiative.' The initiative is the apotheosis of democracy." What has the Minister in charge of the Bill to say to that? The Minister would have been acting more in harmony with the spirit of the times if he had introduced a measure proposing proportionate representation. In France they have adopted it; in Tasmania they have adopted it; and they are inquiring into it in England. I have read one of the latest books on proportionate representation, and I may say it is an aspect of electoral reform that is worth considering, and without at this stage expressing any decided opinion with regard to it, I will say that it is a question that is much more in harmony with the spirit of the times than the present Bill. There are other ways in which the Home Secretary might have shown his democracy if he wished to show he was a social democrat. He could have reduced the period of residence. The period of residence in the Commonwealth qualification is six months, and in every other State of Australia it is six months, excepting in New South Wales, where it is only three months. If a man lives six months in the Commonwealth, he can get a vote for the Commonwealth. Here you must live in this State twelve months, and two months' additional residence must take place in any electorate before a man or woman can have their name placed on the roll. If the hon. gentleman had been as democratic as he has said he is, he could have knocked out the last remnant of the property vote and made residence the chief qualification. Instead of that, he has retained the old property vote, and we hold that to-day the spirit of the times is to do away with the property qualification altogether, and simply give a vote for a man's manhood or a woman's womanhood. The fact that they are citizens of the State should be the supreme reason why they should have the right to vote. If we are to have the postal vote, which I disagree with altogether, why do we not do as is done in the other States? In every other State that has the postal vote, with the exception of New South Wales, they have an absentee vote. If we are to have the postal vote, why not also the absentee vote? Why not try and do as they are doing in New Zealand? Why not copy the more democratic Dominion of New Zealand, rather than go back in a reactionary way and throw out the absentee vote,

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which has given votes to some of the best men in Australia? The hon. gentleman should have retained it, and made it more effective. If he had been as democratic as he pretends, he could have given us a definition of "residence" which everybody could have understood. We have four or five clauses defining what "residence" is. Why should not "residence" be where a man resides for the time being? The fact that a man is a worker, that he is twenty-one years of age, and contributes to the welfare of Queensland should be a sufficient qualification. Why should we have all kinds of restrictions so that it is difficult to know what residence means? I should like to know why a man should have to live two months in the electorate before he gets his name on the roll of that electorate. If he lives twelve months in Queensland, why should he not be able to put his name on the roll at once? It means that many may possibly be disfranchised for at least four months, perhaps for six months. That is a very undesirable thing, for elections may take place during those six months, and we are supposed to believe that every man should have the chance of expressing his opinion at the ballot-box. We should make it possible for every man and woman to be on the roll; but that does not seem to be the object of this Bill. The property voter can get put on the roll in a much simpler manner—in fact, within twenty-four hours—and that seems to indicate that manhood is considered of less value than money. That is why we say that the hon. members sitting on the other side of the House stand for the property classes, stand for the men who have the wealth, and not for the manhood of the nation. I think it is a very clear proof that there is a great deal more value set upon property than upon manhood and womanhood so far as this Bill is concerned. Then why should all these unnecessary questions be asked? A lot of them are ridiculous. Is it not enough to know that he or she who is making the application or seeking to record his or her vote is twenty-one years of age? Is it not enough to know that they have lived the legal time in Queensland? Why should all these veracious questions be asked? If the returning officer goes through the feat of putting these questions to them, there will be a good many who will not vote.

Mr. KIRWAN: That is the object.

Mr. ADAMSON: I think that these things prove that this is not the democratic measure we should have expected from the Home Secretary, whom I respect in many ways, and who, I find, treats everyone in a most humane and courteous way. I find him, outside of the floor of this House, a courteous gentleman, and I cannot understand how he can be so distrustful of the people in the way that is shown by the Bill of which he is in charge. I wonder what the men who voted for the wiping out of the postal vote on a previous occasion are going to do. There are ever so many on that side who voted four or five years ago for the wiping out of the postal vote. They will tell us this postal vote is safeguarded. I am not going to take an unfair advantage and say that it is not safer than the previous postal vote, but still there is very grave danger in the postal vote we now have before us. I wonder, too, what certain members of the other House who voted for the knocking out of the postal vote a few years ago are now

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going to do. I wonder what the hon. members for Cunningham, Cook, and Fitzroy, and others are going to do. We also know how the Hon. Mr. Barlow voted on this question in another place a few years ago. I wonder what he is going to do when this Bill reaches another place? I have his remarks here on the subject.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. ADAMSON: If I am not in order in quoting a speech of a member of another place, I will bow to your ruling, Sir. I would have liked to have quoted those remarks, as they are very apropos of the present debate. I could have quoted from the speeches of some of the hon. members of this House.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member will be perfectly in order in referring to the speeches made in this House during a previous session.

Mr. ADAMSON: I have not any selected. (Laughter.) But I would have liked to get into "Hansard" the quotation from the speech of the Hon. Mr. Barlow. I will oppose this Bill because I think it is opposed to true democracy, because it bolsters up the strength of the property classes, and because it disfranchises some thousands of the best citizens of the State. If we can induce any hon. members sitting on the other side to join with us, as they should do, in view of their past professions, we will amend this Bill so as to make it a truly democratic Bill. As it is, however, the measure is opposed to the true spirit of democracy, and it proves that the present Government is a reactionary one. For these and many other reasons, I am going to oppose the Bill to the best of my power.

* Mr. LARCOMBE (*Kessel*): When the hon. member for Port Curtis was speaking, he was "Hear, heard!" by the Premier and the Home Secretary, and it was rather amusing to listen to their lamentable "Hear, hearing!" They were trying to work up a little interest in the hon. member's speech. The hon. gentleman's remarks, however, were very flat, and were more like a bottle of stale soda water—a bottle that had been standing about an hour without the cork. I am sure the Home Secretary will appreciate the simile. There was a dramatic company in the Central district that played in Gladstone. One of the actors during the course of the performance had occasion to remark, "We want a villain," and the crowd spontaneously roared, "Where is Kessel?" That is what the electors of Central Queensland think of the member for Port Curtis.

Mr. E. B. C. COBBER: That was Rockhampton jealousy.

Mr. LARCOMBE: If there is any jealousy—which I do not admit—it is in Gladstone. Instead of jealousy, however, at the present time we are working up a strong agitation for the creation of a new State which will include Gladstone.

Mr. KESSELL: Where are you working up that agitation?

Mr. LARCOMBE: I would very much like to reply to that interjection, but I think I have digressed sufficiently, and I notice that you, Mr. Speaker, are observing me with a very significant look. (Laughter.) Every hon. member will admit that we require electoral reform in Queensland, but no reasonably

minded person will argue that the measure introduced by the Home Secretary can, even by the greatest stretch of imagination, be properly designated as electoral reform. It is electoral retrogression, and it is worthy of the Government. They are true to their tradition that they are the most reactionary Government in Australia, and they are introducing an Elections Bill which, if placed upon the statute-book in its present form, will be absolutely the most reactionary in Australasia. This Bill is simply an attempt to prolong the political existence of the present Government—an attempt to shield their mismanagement and incapacity in land administration, in railway administration, and in their public works policy. I am satisfied that the electors of Queensland will realise that this is an attempt to place a barrier between them and the Government, and when they do that, instead of the tide of democracy being stemmed in Queensland, it will flow with increasing intensity, and it will ultimately engulf the Government which is seeking to pass this Bill, which is wrongly designated as electoral reform. In attempting to perpetuate their political existence by the introduction of this measure, the Government have discarded all the soundest principles of electoral legislation, as based upon our own experience and upon the experience of other States of Australia. They have studiously discarded all the sound principles of the legislation in the other States, and have adopted absolutely all the worst provisions that they could take from the Acts in operation in the other States of Australia. If this Bill is passed in its present form, it will sully the fair name of Australia and saddle us with one of the most offensive, inquisitorial, and reactionary measures that has ever been known in this or any other country. This is no exaggerated assertion, and it can be verified by reference to any of the Acts now in operation in the other States that have been mentioned by the hon. member for Rockhampton. In Western Australia, in Tasmania, in New South Wales, in South Australia, despite the fact that there are anti-Labour Governments in power, we do not find a measure comparable to this Bill. In Western Australia the qualification for enrolment is six months' residence, in Victoria six months, in South Australia six months, and in New South Wales three months' residence only is required, provided the person has been six months in the Commonwealth. But here in Queensland we are asked to pass a Bill compelling persons to reside in the State for twelve months, and to remain two months in an electorate, before they are qualified for enrolment. Suppose, for instance, that a person were to come from some other State and reside in a particular electorate in Queensland for eleven months, that would not qualify him to be enrolled, and, if that same person had to remove to another electorate, he would have to remain two months in that electorate before he could apply to be enrolled, and the actual enrolment would not take place until after something like sixteen months' residence. This provision is going to disfranchise thousands and thousands of electors in different parts of Queensland. Shearers, for instance, and miners, and similar classes of workers are subject to the taxation of the country; they are subject to the laws of the country; but because they are compelled to travel about from place to place to earn their livelihood, it is regarded as a crime, and they are to be deprived of their political freedom—deprived of their political rights—which is a violation

of the axiom that there shall be no taxation without representation; and I say unhesitatingly that the Government, in introducing this amending Bill, are really aiming a blow at the principle of adult suffrage. It is a subtle and treacherous blow at the principle of adult suffrage, and an attempt to concentrate again, in the hands of a privileged few, the political power of this State. The abolition of the absentee vote will do away with one of the very best provisions that the present Act contains, and the reintroduction of the postal vote will reintroduce a principle that has been present with malpractice and corruption. That was the experience, not only of this State, but the experience at Commonwealth elections when the postal vote was in operation. What are the claims for the reintroduction of the postal vote in this State? The Government claim, first of all, that it means the obtaining of a full expression of opinion from the electors of Queensland, and, secondly, that it is necessary to enable the women and the sick and infirm to record their votes. Let us test these claims by the actual experience in Queensland, and also by the experience of the Commonwealth elections. But before doing so, let me say that the very nature of the measure indicates how absurd the first claim of the Government is—that they require a full expression of public opinion at the elections. The full expression of the opinion of the electors at the last Federal elections is one of the strongest reasons for the introduction of this measure, and it is really to prevent the full and free expression of opinion at the next State elections that this measure has been introduced. The reason given by the Government for the reintroduction of the postal vote is not borne out by experience. It is absolutely disproved by experience, and that being so, why does the Home Secretary or any other member sitting on the other side of the House attempt to reintroduce it without giving any sound or logical argument for so doing? Let us apply the test of the Home Secretary—that the reintroduction of the postal vote will mean a full and free expression of the opinion of the electors in this State. We find that in 1907 the percentage of votes at that election was 71.61. In 1908 it was 68.39 per cent. Those were two years in which the postal vote was exercised. In 1909, after the postal vote had been abolished, we find that the percentage of electors voting in Queensland had gone up to 72.39; and in 1912 it had actually gone up to 75.52. Does that square with the argument of hon. members opposite that the postal vote means a high percentage vote? It proves absolutely the reverse. When the postal vote was used in Queensland the percentage of votes was much smaller than when the postal vote was absent and the absentee vote was in operation. Now, that is an argument which certainly deserves some consideration from hon. members opposite. Now, let us further make a comparison between Queensland under the absentee vote and without a postal vote and the other States where they have a postal vote. We find that in 1908, the vote in Victoria was 53.64 per cent. of the number of persons on the roll, in 1911 it was 63.61 per cent., so that in neither case has the vote in Victoria, with a postal vote, come up to that in Queensland, where there has been no postal vote. In South Australia, during the last two elections, the corresponding figures were as follow:—In 1910 the vote was 64.03 per cent., in 1912 63.93 per cent. Now we find that there again, with the postal vote in operation, the percentage of votes was not nearly as high as it was in Queensland when

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we had no postal vote. Now let us take Tasmania at the last two elections, and the same result is shown. In 1909 we find that the percentage of voters was 43.67, in 1912 it was 69.73. Therefore, we find that in neither Victoria, South Australia, nor Tasmania, where the postal vote was in operation, did the percentage come up to 70 per cent., although here in Queensland, without any postal vote, but with the absentee vote, during the last two elections our percentage of voting has been much over 70 per cent. I say that dissipates the arguments of hon. members opposite.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The Labour party is better organised here.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The hon. gentleman says the Labour party is better organised here. Why, they have a Labour Government in Western Australia; they have a Labour Government in New South Wales; and what is the use of saying that the Labour party is better organised here? I am not giving the figures for any party. I am giving the general figures; we cannot discriminate from these figures as to how the votes were cast. Let us apply a similar test to the last few elections in Australia. Let us apply the test where the postal vote has been in operation, and see what conclusion follows from the figures as shown in official documents. In 1910 the percentage of voters to the persons on the roll was 62.80, and in 1913 it was 73.42. Now, we find that in the Federal arena, when the postal vote was in operation, the percentage of voting was not nearly as high as it has been when the postal vote has been absent and the absentee vote has been in force. These figures further confirm my contention, and they prove it irrefutably, and the eloquence and oratory of hon. members opposite cannot refute and controvert the argument that is contained in them. They prove overwhelmingly that the postal vote does not mean a high percentage of voting, but that, on the contrary, where it is absent the percentage of voting is much higher. It is also argued that the reintroduction of the postal vote is necessary to enable the wives and families of the farmers to record their votes. That argument is also disproved by experience. It is also disproved by official figures. We find that the percentage of postal votes recorded to electors enrolled in 1910 was as follows:—In Victoria it was 1.99, in Western Australia 1.46, in Queensland 1.44, in Tasmania 1.25, in South Australia .84, and in New South Wales .75. Here we find that the highest percentage vote was recorded in the smallest States. Now, if the vote was necessary in order to enable the wives of farmers and settlers generally to record their votes, then we should have found that the percentage in South Australia, Queensland, and other large States would have been much larger than in Victoria, which is a very small State, where they have every facility and every convenience for recording their votes. On the contrary, we find that in the larger States the percentage of postal votes to the number of electors enrolled was much smaller than it was in Victoria. And it is interesting to note that in the little State of Tasmania the percentage was 1.25—a place where you would naturally think the percentage of postal votes would be very small. Now, if we take the number of polling-places in the various States, we find that where the greatest number of polling-places existed the percentage of postal votes was larger. One would naturally think that where there was

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the least number of polling-places—in the big States—the percentage would be largest, but we find that in Victoria, the second smallest of the States, the postal vote was 50 per cent. of the total vote. In view of these statements, it cannot be fairly or logically contended that the reintroduction of the postal vote is necessary in order to enable the farmers and settlers to record their votes. In the Federal elections, it is interesting to note, the same malpractice and the same corruption that took place in Queensland under the operation of the postal vote also took place, and it was for that reason—it was because of this malpractice and this corruption—that a postal vote was expunged from the Federal Elections Act some time ago. It is also contended that this vote is necessary to enable women electors to record their votes. This new-born zeal for the women voters of Queensland is rather interesting, because hon. members opposite are the traditional enemies of adult suffrage.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. LARCOMBE: They have at all times attempted to prevent the women of Queensland obtaining the franchise, and now that they have obtained it in spite of them, they come along and tell them how solicitous they are of their welfare, and how much they require a big vote of women electors, and therefore they are reintroducing the postal vote. It is rather significant that we never had a Labour Government in Australia, with the exception of the short-lived Dawson Government, until the women obtained the franchise. Immediately the women obtained it, Labour Governments began to spring into existence. They have had one in South Australia, they have one in New South Wales, they have one in Western Australia, and they have had one in the National Parliament.

Mr. THEODORE: And we will have one here before very long.

Mr. LARCOMBE: And undoubtedly, as the deputy leader of the Opposition says, we shall have one here very shortly, in spite of this attempt to deprive the women of Queensland of the protection they are entitled to under any Electoral Act. And I say advisedly that the reintroduction of the postal vote would deprive them of the protection to which they are entitled. The secrecy of the ballot would be violated and we would have open voting again in the State. Hon. members opposite have been persistently and consistently opposed to adult suffrage. In 1904, when the Electoral Reform Bill was going through this House, hon. members like the democratic Treasurer—(Opposition laughter)—the democratic Treasurer did his best to prevent the women of Queensland obtaining a vote.

The TREASURER: Not correct.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The hon. member for Toowong moved an amendment that the vote for women should not come into operation until there was a reduction of members in Queensland, and the Treasurer supported that amendment. The Treasurer laughs. The Secretary for Railways supported it, and also other hon. members on that side, who are not present, and whose names I will not mention.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have it.

Mr. LARCOMBE: They have it, but no thanks to the Secretary for Railways, who

supported the amendment of the hon. member for Toowong, and did his best to prevent the women of Queensland getting the franchise until there was a reduction in the number of members. There has been no reduction in the number of members, and there is no probability of any reduction within the next decade; and, that being so, the women of Queensland would not have had the franchise to-day, and would not have had it for the next decade, had the Secretary for Railways, the Treasurer, and the hon. member for Toowong had their way. But, thanks to the real democrats of Queensland, that amendment was defeated, and the women of Queensland possess the franchise to-day. I would like the women of Queensland to bear that in mind when they are reading the arguments of hon. members opposite that the reintroduction of the postal vote is specially in their interests. I say that that alone shows the utter hollowness of the argument of hon. members opposite that this vote is in the interests of the female voters of this State. Further, the official figures prove that the women of Queensland, or of any other State in Australia, do not require the postal vote in order to exercise the franchise. On the contrary, it is proved that the intimidation practised when that vote was in operation prevented thousands of women from recording their vote. Let us take the official figures to see how the women voted after the postal vote was abolished, and also the figures as to how they voted when the postal vote was in operation. In 1907, the percentage of female voters in Queensland was 63.64, and in 1908, 69.05—that was for the two years that the postal vote was in operation. In 1909, after it was abolished, the percentage of female voters went up to 69.36, and in 1912 it actually went up to 75.02. Can hon. members opposite contend in the face of these figures that the postal vote is required by the women of Queensland to enable them to exercise the franchise? Do not these figures prove that they were intimidated in the use of the postal vote? If they required the postal vote, then the percentage of voting would have been much greater when the postal vote was in operation than when it was absent; but we find that it was much higher in the two years after the repeal of the postal vote than it was in the two years before it was repealed. It may be argued that that is a narrow argument to use, and one which cannot be borne out in comparison with other States. Let us compare Queensland without the postal vote with the other States where the postal vote has been in operation. In 1909, the percentage of female voting in Tasmania was 43.67, and in 1912 it was 69.73. We find that at the last two elections the percentage of female voting was nothing near as great in Tasmania under the postal vote as it had been in Queensland where there was no postal vote in operation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There was a very big improvement.

Mr. LARCOMBE: In South Australia, the same result is shown. The percentage of female voting for the last two elections there is 51.03 per cent. and 65.93 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: An improvement.

Mr. LARCOMBE: It is nothing to be compared with 1912 in Queensland, where there was no postal vote, and where the percentage was 75.2 per cent. In the face of

these official statistics, I contend that the women of Queensland do not require the reintroduction of the postal vote in order that they may exercise the franchise. They do not vote in many instances under it, because of intimidation; and when the postal vote is in operation and the absentee vote repealed, their husbands, in thousands of instances, will be prevented from exercising their political rights. I was saying a few moments ago that hon. members opposite are not the true friends of the women of the State, and that they are depriving them of the secrecy of the ballot—depriving them of the protection they require. We know there are many workers' wives who do not care to let the employers of their husbands know how they vote, and there is no reason why they should. There are plenty, I will admit, who do not care two straws, but there are many who require the secret ballot, and we know they will not get it under the postal vote system. That is no idle statement, and it has been testified to by many hon. members in this Chamber in 1907 and 1908. It is interesting to note that the then Premier of the State, Dr. Kidston, when supporting the repeal of the postal vote sections of the Act, said—

“To all intents and purposes, if we continue our Elections Act with this blemish in it, we abolish the protection of the ballot so far as women are concerned.”

There we have it on the testimony of the ex-leader of the party opposite that the postal vote strips the women of Queensland of the political protection that they are entitled to at the ballot-box, and yet, in the face of this experience, we find hon. members opposite unblushingly getting up and stating that it is in the interests of women that the postal vote is being reintroduced. I contend that the Government's policy is a mistaken one. They either do not realise what has taken place at the elections when the postal vote was in operation in Queensland, and also in the Federal arena, or, on the other hand, their action is one of duplicity, and they fully realise what is taking place, and, knowing that the Labour Government have come into power since the women of Queensland have obtained the vote, they are attempting in a subtle and treacherous way to deprive them of political protection, and, therefore, of the right to exercise the franchise. Hon. members, no matter on what side they sit, should refuse to acquiesce in a measure of this description; they should insist that this iniquitous postal-voting clause should be excised before the Bill passes. Another piece of information that may be interesting, in view of the arguments urged by hon. members opposite, is that in 1910, when we find that the percentage of postal votes was highest, the birth rate was lowest. It has been argued that it was necessary that this postal-voting system should be introduced to enable women in a certain condition to exercise the franchise. I would like to give the birth rate for the different States of Australia in 1910, and the percentage of postal votes recorded that year at the Federal elections, to show how valueless the argument is. In New South Wales, in 1910, the birth rate was 27.83 per cent.; in Queensland, 27.53 per cent.; in Western Australia, 27.99 per cent.; in South Australia, 26.38 per cent.; in Tasmania, 29.25 per cent.; and in Victoria, 24.51 per cent. In Victoria, where the birth rate was lowest, the percentage of postal voting was highest. We

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find that in Tasmania, where the birth rate was highest, the percentage of postal voting was ~~about~~ the lowest. Now, if there was anything in the argument of hon. members opposite that this postal vote is required, then the postal vote would be highest where the birth rate was highest, and lowest where the birth rate was lowest, whereas, as a matter of fact, the postal vote was [5.30 p.m.] highest where the birth rate was lowest. That is an interesting piece of information in view of the arguments used by the hon. members opposite. I contend at the outset that the reintroduction of the postal vote will lead to the malpractice and corruption that took place in the past. It is interesting to note what took place at the 1907 election. There were 21,904 postal-ballot certificates issued in connection with that election, and of that number only 20,624 were returned, so that 1,280 were not returned at all. Now, where did those 1,280 postal-ballot certificates go? Echo answers, Where? Hon. members on this side of the House have shown that in many instances it was proved that these missing ballot-papers were torn up by the justices of the peace who received them from the persons recording their votes. They attested the votes, and when they found that the voters were not supporting the candidate that they were supporting themselves, and whom they were canvassing for, they destroyed them. I say that any person desiring political purity in the face of these figures cannot consistently support the reintroduction of the postal vote for fear of a reintroduction of these malpractices. The history of the Federal elections for 1910 shows that similar malpractices took place. There were 36,820 postal-ballot certificates issued for that election, and there were only 29,249 returned, coming from New South Wales, 6,219; Victoria, 14,049; Queensland, 4,020; South Australia, 1,751; Western Australia, 1,977; and Tasmania, 1,235. There were 2,166 that were returned too late, leaving a balance of 5,445 that were not returned at all. Now, a system that permits of this scandalous doing away with ballot-papers, or of keeping them until such time as it is too late for them to be counted, and rendering them informal in different ways, should not receive any encouragement from hon. members of this Chamber. It has been proven by figures officially compiled that at the 1907 Queensland general elections in Townsville, Drayton and Toowoomba, Ipswich, and Charters Towers, there were 5,552 postal votes cast, which amounted to five-thirteenths of the whole of the postal votes of the State. These figures certainly rather suggest that postal voting was not the voting of the sick person or the necessarily absent person. If the settlers of Queensland require the postal vote for the purpose of exercising their franchise, how is it that five-thirteenths of the whole postal vote of the State was cast in the big cities in and around Brisbane and North Queensland? That is conclusive proof that the arguments of hon. members opposite will not stand the searchlight of investigation. The abolition of the absentee vote, as I said at the outset, is a subtle attempt to undermine the principle of adult suffrage. It is a mockery to tell a man when he applies for the franchise that he may obtain it on certain conditions, and then, when he obtains it, to lay down conditions that will prevent him from exercising his vote. I know exactly what the abolition of the absentee vote will mean in Central Queensland, or in any mining district. In the mining industry there are

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thousands of men who have to travel from one electorate to another within very short periods, through no fault of their own. A fall in the price of copper affects a place like Mount Chalmers and other mining centres in the Central district. Some time ago the price of copper went down, and some 400 or 500 men were suddenly compelled to change their residence and move to some other part of the State, in order to obtain a livelihood. In addition to the price of copper falling, the shortage of water compels the owners to close it down, and that means that the men who are engaged at that mine have to shift to another place. The men engaged in the meat industry have also to submit to great changes. It is absolutely necessary for the men engaged in that industry to travel, and, if we pass this Bill as framed by the Government, then I say we will be depriving those men of their political rights, because they have to reside two months in an electorate before they can qualify for a vote, and it may be too late for them to get a vote for an election. We know very well that the men engaged in Mount Chalmers or any other mine, or in a sugar centre, are often compelled to leave an electorate just before the issue of a writ, and they are prevented from obtaining a postal-ballot certificate for that very reason. We may assume that an election will take place within two months after the issue of the writs, and that will mean that thousands of men will be absolutely deprived of their political rights, and prevented from exercising the franchise. They cannot obtain postal-ballot certificates, because they are not in the electorate when the writ is issued, and they are not in the new electorate in time to get their names enrolled for that electorate. They may be scattered throughout Brisbane, Buranda, South Brisbane, Murrumba, Charters Towers, and other electorates, and although they are subject to the laws of the country, they are deprived of their political rights and prevented from exercising the franchise. Is that a condition of affairs that any fair or reasonably minded person should permit to pass this House without a protest? In many cases, even if the elections were three months off, these workers would not be enabled to exercise the franchise, because, although it only takes two months to qualify, it takes four or five months to pass the bi-monthly court and have the names placed finally on the electoral roll. Without going into much detail—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has exceeded the time allowed him by the Standing Orders.

Mr. LARCOMBE: I am very sorry, Mr. Speaker.

* Mr. GILLIES (*Earham*): I think that the previous speaker has made it very clear that Queensland possesses the most undemocratic electoral law of any State in the union, and this Bill seeks to make it much more so. When we consider that this Government are making frantic efforts—more so than any other State in the Commonwealth—to induce immigrants to come here from over the border and from overseas to become citizens of this State, it is almost unthinkable that they should seek to perpetuate such an undemocratic measure as this. The previous speaker pointed out that in the Commonwealth, so far as personal residence is concerned, six months is all that is required for immigrants coming from overseas to qualify to get on the roll. In New South

Wales they require residence for six months in the Commonwealth, three months in the State, and one month in the electorate, to enable a man to get on the electoral roll. In all the other States, except Queensland, six months' residence is sufficient to enable a citizen to qualify to get on the electoral roll. Queensland has been spending thousands of pounds in advertising the State, and bringing immigrants here, yet it compels these men to remain practically as foreigners for a year, and places them on the same footing as criminals and lunatics for practically sixteen months. This is the only State of the Commonwealth that requires twelve months' residence before a man or woman is allowed to have a say in making the laws which they are asked to obey. Under the Bill which is now before us the term of residence is extended. If this measure passes into law, it will be necessary, not only to reside twelve months in the State, but also to reside two months and two days in a particular electorate before a person can have his name registered by a Registration Court. Then another two months must elapse before the revision takes place and the unfortunate applicant is allowed to record his vote. We hear a good deal of talk about law and order and democracy. When people go on strike or break the law in any way, they are asked why they do not endeavour to bring about reforms by constitutional means—why they do not return to Parliament members who will give them the reforms they require. The people who talk in that way about law and order point to the secret ballot as the remedy for all evils, and yet they place obstacles in the way of citizens exercising the franchise. A few days ago I took the trouble to write to New South Wales for a copy of the claim for enrolment which is used in that State. Under this Bill an applicant for enrolment will be asked to answer no less than sixteen questions before he can get his name on the roll. In New South Wales the number of questions the claimant has to answer is eight—just half the number prescribed by this Bill. The information which an applicant for enrolment has to give in New South Wales is as follows:—

“Surname, christian name at full length, sex, place of residence, occupation.”

The applicant then goes on to say—

“1. I am a (natural-born or naturalised) subject of the King.

“2. I am not under the age of twenty-one years.

“3. I have resided, or had my principal place of abode immediately prior to the date of this claim—

For six months in the Commonwealth of Australia; and

For three months in New South Wales; and

For one month in the electoral district abovenamed.

“4. My name is not, to the best of my knowledge, on the electoral roll for any district.”

The inquisitorial questions which are to be asked under this measure are enough to scare the average immigrant away from the Registration Court, and I can quite believe that that is the object in framing these questions, and that the object of certain persecutions or prosecutions in the past was

to scare people from applying to have their names put on the electoral roll. The disabilities placed in the way of the average elector getting on the roll are increased by this Bill, which provides that five additional questions shall be put to applicants for enrolment. Some of those questions are insulting, and apply to matters of private concern, and no individual seeking to become a qualified voter should be required to answer them before he is allowed a voice in the making of the laws of the country, which he has to obey. The position of a Queensland under this Bill—whether he is a native of Queensland or of any other part of Australia—is that he must answer all the questions prescribed in the Bill before he is allowed to get his name on the electoral roll. What is the necessity for a cumbersome electoral court? The other States have no such form and no such procedure as is required by the electoral law of this State to be followed in connection with the matter of putting a name on the roll. In other States the application is received by the registrar, and he places the applicant's name on the roll. But in this State an application must be lodged with the electoral registrar forty-eight hours before the sitting of the court. Under the old Act it was only necessary for the claim to be in prior to the rising of the court. Under this Bill a person may have resided two months in the electorate on the very day that the court sits, and he will have to remain there another two months before he can give the required forty-eight hours' notice of his desire to be placed on the roll. Then he will have to wait another two months for the revision of the roll before he will be entitled to vote, so that the average Australian, on attaining his majority, who comes from over the border, will have to wait at the very least sixteen months before he can get his name on the roll and have a voice in the making of the laws which he has to obey.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What rot!

Mr. GILLIES: It may be dulness on my part, but I am not able to see the sense of the interjection. I think I have made it quite clear that it is possible for a man to come direct from another State and remain here four years before he has a say in the making of the laws of the country, because, owing to the provisions of this Bill requiring an applicant to lodge his application for enrolment forty-eight hours before the sitting of the court, a man who has completed his two months' residence on the day the court sits will have to wait until the next court before he can send in an application, and if an election takes place in the meantime he will not be able to vote until the next general election takes place, which will be three years later, and that, added to the term of residence required, makes four years.

The HOME SECRETARY: And if he happened at the time of that particular election to be making a trip to the old country, it might be eight years before he would have a vote.

Mr. GILLIES: That is quite possible, and the possibility appears to please the Home Secretary. It is passing strange that in this democratic age all these obstacles are going to be placed in the way of citizens getting their names on the roll. The property vote is not going to be wiped out, and no obstacle is placed in the way of the property voter transferring his vote from one electo-

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rate to another. As the hon. member for Keppel said, he can record his vote in another electorate within twenty-four hours if he so chooses. The term "home" as defined in this measure is one which I believe will disqualify a great many men who have no home at all. If a man or woman is staying at an hotel, or living in a boarding-house, or a tent, having no permanent home, he or she will be disqualified under this Bill. According to my reading of the measure, it is necessary for a person to have a permanent home in the electorate before he will be allowed to get enrolled. If, notwithstanding all the obstacles placed in the way of enrolment, a man succeeds in getting his name on the roll, he will lose his vote if he happens to be out of the electorate at the time of an election. The difficulties in the way of recording votes are much greater under this Bill than they are under the Consolidated Act. The Home Secretary attempted to give reasons why the postal vote should be reintroduced and the absentee vote provision repealed, but I think he miserably failed in the attempt. No speaker on that side of the House has so far offered any reason why the present system of absent voting should be repealed. In my own electorate one in sixteen of the electors will be disfranchised by the repealing of the absentee vote, and I think that will probably be the average for the whole of the State. I want to say that, personally, I did not benefit much by the absentee vote, as the absentee votes reduced my majority at the last election. There were 154 persons allowed to record absentee votes in my electorate, and under the system proposed by this Bill those people will be disfranchised. So far, no speaker has offered any substantial reason why the present system of absentee voting should be repealed. There is no possibility of corrupt practices under the present system of absentee voting, and those who have been recording absentee votes will have no possibility of exercising the franchise under this Bill. To give you some idea of the various people who exercise the absentee vote, I will give you the result of the scrutiny of those votes in my own electorate that I made on the occasion of the last election. I found that electors on the Eacham roll recorded their votes for Eacham all over Queensland. They recorded them at Killarney, Rocklea, East Toowoomba, Wooloowin, the Temperance Hall in Brisbane, Woolloongabba, Roma, Yeppoon, Clermont, Dalby, Springsure, Sandgate, Gympie, Buranda, Boonah, Esk, Rosewood, Wynnum, Paddington, Kelvin Grove, Oakey, Wagona, Cairns, Chillagoe, Bibbakra, Powellbrook, Georgetown, Almaden, Gladstone, Dimbulah, Ingham, Watsonville, Charters Towers, Stannary Hills, Bowen, Cloncurry, Townsville, Ravenswood, Winton, Ayr, and other places. Practically all over Queensland absentee votes were recorded for the Eacham electorate. Probably other members could have given a similar experience if they had taken the trouble to ascertain where the absentee votes for their electorate were recorded. The absentee votes recorded all over Queensland represented one in every sixteen, and they will be disfranchised under the present Bill. The total on the roll at the last election for Queensland was 309,590. Of these, 218,633 voted, or 75.52 per cent. The number of absentee votes was 8,929 males and 4,060 females, or, approximately,

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one in every sixteen. As I have just stated, I believe that one in sixteen will be disfranchised under the present Bill, and the Home Secretary has given no reason why the present system should be repealed. He has offered no reason why those 13,000 electors should be disfranchised, and I think it is a scandalous thing that those men who may be compelled to be away from their electorates on polling-day should not have the opportunity of recording their votes. There is no provision in the present Bill for a person to exercise the postal vote unless he has another elector to witness his ballot-paper. The Bill makes it very clear that it is necessary not only to apply for the absentee voting-paper within the electorate, but also that the vote itself shall be recorded inside the electorate. It says the voter shall vote within the boundaries of the electoral district for which he is qualified, and not elsewhere. That means that the application must be made after the issue of the writ, and to make the application it is necessary for the elector to have his application for an absentee voting-paper witnessed by another elector or the returning officer. That means that the application must be made within the electorate, and that the vote must be recorded in the electorate. It says no person shall have a postal vote except within the boundaries of the electoral district in which the voter is voting. The penalty for a breach of the Act is £100. I therefore maintain that practically all those who record their votes under the absentee voting system will be disfranchised, and there has been no reason offered why they should be disfranchised. There is another thing I would like to have some reason offered for, and that is in connection with the cancellation of polling-places after they have been advertised. It should be a reasonable thing for the Home Secretary's Department to find out before an election is advertised what polling-places are required, and, if polling-places are advertised, I see no reason why they should be cancelled. It should be a simple thing for the responsible officers of the Home Department to furnish a return before an election takes place specifying the polling-places which are necessary and which might be cancelled. There is another thing which is of importance in connection with this Bill. I notice the initialling of the ballot-papers is to be done away with. That may not be an unmixed blessing. In the event of the returning officer, or the presiding officer, failing to initial a ballot-paper it will not be informal. The number of informal votes in connection with one of the referenda proposals at the recent Federal election for the whole of Australia was 171,652. The instructions to the presiding officers and to the electors should be so clear that the number of informal votes should be reduced to a minimum, and, if mistakes are made by the presiding officer, the penalty should be disqualification from again acting. There are severe penalties for the returning officer and presiding officers who omit to do certain things, and probably some of those penalties are too drastic. Certainly, however, the presiding officer who fails to carry out his duty should be disqualified from again acting in that capacity. Ignorance or carelessness should carry with it disqualification. The penalty laid down in clause 29 is rather a drastic one to be imposed on a returning officer for making a mistake.

CREMATION BILL.

FIRST READING.

On the motion of Mr. MACARTNEY (*Toowong*), this Bill, received by message from the Council, was read a first time, and the second reading was made an Order of the Day for Thursday, 21st August.

COMPANIES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST READING.

On the motion of the PREMIER (Hon. D. F. Denham, *Oxley*), this Bill, received by message from the Council, was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES BILL.

RECEIVED FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, forwarding this Bill for the consideration of the Assembly.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the consideration of the message was made an Order of the Day for the next sitting of the House.

ELECTIONS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. GILLIES (continuing) said: I notice there is a provision in the Bill under which persons may be fined for disturbing political meetings. I suppose it is a natural corollary to disfranchisement that there

[7 p.m.] should be power in this Bill to deal with citizens when they interrupt public meetings, and this Bill gives power to the chairman, acting under instructions from the speaker, to take them along to the watchhouse and have them fined up to £10. Personally, I am of opinion that the right to be heard is one of the first principles of British justice. I have no time for any individual who may come along to a public meeting and disturb it; but the question arises, When is a public meeting disturbed? Surely not by a few pertinent interjections! For instance, if a public speaker were addressing a gathering in any particular centre, and he made use of expressions similar to those made use of by the hon. member for Port Curtis this afternoon, I cannot imagine anyone with a spark of manhood in him replying in any other terms than those used by the leader of the Opposition. In fact, if the leader of the Opposition had not replied in the terms he did, he would have fallen in my estimation. If any public speaker makes use of insulting or misleading statements with regard to any person or party, is it right that the audience should sit quietly and listen to those insulting statements? I think it would be quite sufficient if provision were made in this Bill for the removal from the hall of any person disturbing the meeting. As far as street corners are concerned, if a man stands up at a street corner and makes misleading or insulting statements, it is only right that he should put up with any interruption that may take place. But if he has paid for a hall, he has a perfect right to be heard; but under this Bill it will be possible for a partial chairman to call upon a policeman to take a respectable citizen to the watchhouse and have him locked up and fined simply for interjecting. I think that is altogether too

drastic, and I hope when the Bill is in Committee an amendment will be moved so far as clause 45 is concerned. I regret, seeing that our electoral law is the most undemocratic of any in any State of the Commonwealth, that a Bill was not brought in to review the whole of our electoral law and consolidate it, and remove the undemocratic provisions it contains. I regard this Bill as being ten times worse than the Industrial Peace Act, because it takes away from the most indispensable class of citizens in this State the right to elect their law-makers. It takes away the right our forefathers fought for, and I think that right is not going to be taken away without some effective protest from the people who are disfranchised. If I know anything about Queenslanders, they are not going to accept this Bill lying down. They are going to make a protest, and possibly the Home Secretary will realise that the position created by the passing of this Bill will bear some comparison to the position created by the Wicked Ten in ancient Rome, which might be well explained in the words of Lord Macaulay—

"Lest when our latest hope is fled
Ye taste of our despair,
And learn by proof in some wild hour
How much the wretched dare."

While the Home Secretary is not Appius Claudius, he is certainly one of the Wicked Ten, and I think Appius Claudius is to be found in another Chamber. I am not going to name him here to-night, because, if I did so, I would come into conflict with you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the father of this Bill—the man who originated this Bill and supplied its most drastic clauses—it to be found in another Chamber, but the Home Secretary must take the responsibility of being associated with the passing of this Bill, and henceforth be regarded by Queenslanders as one of the Wicked Ten.

Mr. PAYNE (*Mitchell*): The hon. member for Port Curtis, when speaking this afternoon, said there was a tendency to drag down this House. I thought, as time went on, the hon. member would grow wise enough not to make use of such words. I can honestly say that no man who has ever occupied a position in this House has ever attempted so much as the hon. member for Port Curtis to drag down the dignity and etiquette that has been practised for so many years in this Chamber. The hon. member set out to belittle the leader of the Opposition, and, amongst other things, he said that the leader of the Opposition was receiving £800 a year.

Mr. KESSELL: I corrected that.

Mr. PAYNE: I would let it be decided by supporters of the present Government whether the leader of the Opposition is not worth £800 while the hon. member for Port Curtis is worth barely £300. I thought he was wise enough to have forgotten all about the Elections Tribunal. I would allow him to select a committee from his side of the House and let them go into the matter, and they would find out, the more inquiries they made, the deeper the hon. member for Port Curtis is in the mire over that case. What is the good of bringing it up here day after day and week after week? The hon. member excused himself by saying that it was a party vote.

Mr. KESSELL: I did not.

Mr. PAYNE: The hon. member said that the hon. member for Wide Bay and I paired, which is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. KESSELL: What did you do?

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Mr. PAYNE: I hardly think it worth while replying to an hon. member of this character. I challenge anybody who sat on that tribunal—any of their own men—to rise in their places and say whether it is correct or incorrect. The hon. member for Wide Bay himself said that he had urgent business and wanted to get away, and the hon. member for Cooroora said that he had tried to arrange a pair. As a matter of fact, every assessor who was on the tribunal objected to leave because there was no arrangement made with me for a pair. I do not doubt the hon. member for Cooroora. I look on him as a man, but there was a misunderstanding. I was never approached at all. It was only because the assessors from our side said, "You had better go, because there will be two on one side and three on the other," and any hon. member who was there can bear that out.

Mr. KESSELL: They threatened to leave the court.

Mr. PAYNE: Then the hon. gentleman comes along here and wants to make out that the two of us paired. That particular statement was no doubt made to cover over the statement that he made, that we voted "party." A more flimsy statement never fell from the lips of any man. I have been asking the assessors from each side whether the hon. gentleman said that the judge ordered some of the assessors out. I understand he said that—I do not wish to misinterpret him. If he did say it, it is a wrong thing for any hon. member to rise in his place and tell such a deliberate untruth.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PAYNE: Well—to make such an incorrect statement. Surely, if we disagree we can be men. The judge never ordered any of the assessors out. Yet we have an hon. member here in the shape of a man who comes along and tells the House that the judge ordered one of the assessors out. Now, I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman who appointed those assessors—and if you do not like to take my word, see the judge yourself and ask him—that he never ordered one of the assessors out. These are things that a man, if he is a man, should take exception to.

Mr. KESSELL: Why did you leave the court?

Mr. PAYNE: I explained why I left. I will ask the hon. member for Cooroora or any other of the assessors what the circumstances were. The hon. member for Cooroora said that it was understood that somebody would pair with the hon. member for Wide Bay and I said, "Why select me?" and he said, "It would not be fair to have three from one side and two from the other." I tell you honestly that no arrangement was made and it was only on the distinct footing of fair play that I went at all. That is the truth, and I challenge any hon. member who sat on that case—on the same side of the House as the hon. member for Port Curtis—to rise in his place and say whether it is correct or incorrect.

Mr. KESSELL: I was there, and I know the facts.

Mr. PAYNE: I ask the hon. member for Cooroora, or any other hon. gentleman who sat on that case to bear me out, or say that what I have stated is not correct. I do not think there was ever a man since I have

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been here—and I have been here in pretty hard party fights, when hard things were said from both sides of the House—who directly or indirectly, in that miserable sneaking way—

Mr. KESSELL: There was nothing sneaking about it. It was too plain. That is the trouble.

Mr. PAYNE: I do not think it is a fair thing that any hon. member should come here and insinuate or make statements in which there is not one word of truth.

Mr. KESSELL: I do not insinuate, I make statements.

Mr. PAYNE: I say that the statements of the hon. member for Port Curtis in reference to the judge ordering me out, and in reference to the pair between the hon. member for Wide Bay and myself, are altogether incorrect.

Mr. HUXHAM: Mr. Booker himself said so.

Mr. PAYNE: I thought that the hon. gentleman had had enough of that tribunal, and that he would have been a wise man and said nothing more about it.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PAYNE: I have been looking up the case, and I do not want to repeat what I have already said. I think you gave the hon. member for Port Curtis very great latitude in attacking me, as the hon. member for Mitchell, this afternoon.

The SPEAKER: I cannot allow hon. members to impute to me a statement that I gave him latitude to attack the hon. member for Mitchell. No hon. member's name was mentioned until the hon. member himself rose. Had the hon. member for Port Curtis attacked any member of this House, I should have been very careful to see that he was curtailed in his language.

Mr. PAYNE: I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker. He distinctly referred to the hon. member for Wide Bay and the hon. member for Mitchell. I do not want to take any undue advantage of any hon. member in this House, but, when an hon. member on this side or that side rises and refers to the hon. member for Mitchell, who is the hon. member for Mitchell? It is just as if he had mentioned my name.

The SPEAKER: I must point out to the hon. member that during the debate this afternoon the hon. member for Port Curtis referred to a question with regard to partisanship, but he did not make an individual attack upon the hon. member for Wide Bay or the hon. member for Mitchell. He merely mentioned it as a question with regard to the support of his argument in another direction. To my knowledge—and I think the House will bear me out as to the remarks of hon. members on both sides—there was no personal attack on either of those hon. members.

Mr. PAYNE: The hon. member for Port Curtis, in speaking of the Elections Tribunal case, has on more than one occasion brought before the House the tremendous cost and the pollution in connection with the present system. If there was any pollution, it was all from his own side. We all know that the hon. member for Port Curtis, or some of his friends, have had canvassers going about and getting votes by every possible means. I

told the judge in court that, in my opinion, those votes could have been bought like books, and I say so now. Take the case of the man Connors. The hon. member in another place, who witnessed the affidavit, is a gentleman with whom I am personally acquainted. Arthur Whittingham would not lend himself to any mean thing, but it was quite natural, when he witnessed the affidavit in Rockhampton, that he might not make any inquiries about it. I will conclude by saying that, if the hon. member for Port Curtis was a wise man, he would hold his tongue about the Elections Tribunal case. I believe that the Speaker can select a panel of members, even from the Government side, who will be honourable enough, when they go into the matter, to prove beyond any doubt that the further they go into the question the deeper the hon. member for Port Curtis is in the mire over the whole thing.

Mr. KESSELL: I am worrying you people a bit.

Mr. PAYNE: As I said in the initial stages of the debate, this Bill is the result of the last Federal election. This is panic legislation, and the Home Secretary did not forget to tell the House about the corruption that took place in the last Federal election. He tried to create an impression that the doors were wide open to pollution in the Federal system of voting to try to pave the way to bring in a measure of this kind. What is the result of the searching inquiry that is being made into the double voting which the Tory Press of Queensland and the Tory Government that now occupies the Treasury benches opposite alleged took place on that occasion? As a result of that searching inquiry they discovered that there was a likelihood of some three voters in every thousand having voted twice.

The HOME SECRETARY: But that does not touch the point I referred to.

Mr. PAYNE: I wonder how anyone in the position of the hon. gentleman could make the rash statement which he made a few weeks ago over the voting at the Federal elections.

The HOME SECRETARY: They are correct statements—absolutely true.

Mr. PAYNE: They wanted to draw a red herring over the track so as to cover the defeat the Tory party met with at that election, and hence this Bill. The hon. gentleman and his supporters say they believe that every man and woman in Queensland should have a vote, and still they bring in a Bill of this kind. If the Bill is carried in its entirety, it will disfranchise 40 per cent. or 50 per cent. of the best men and women in Queensland—the sons and daughters of the old pioneers in this country who went out and blazed the track, and helped to build up the cities. We know that unless the country districts are prosperous our cities will go flat. The residence qualification in the Bill is very amusing to me. That alone will disfranchise 50 per cent. of the shearers and shed hands in my electorate, and in every other country electorate in Queensland. Electors have to state that they have a fixed place of residence with some idea of returning there. It may not be in one place.

The HOME SECRETARY: It need not be in one place.

Mr. PAYNE: How about the man who lives in a tent?

The HOME SECRETARY: That is a fixed place of residence.

Mr. THEODORE: Not when there is a cyclone. (Laughter.)

Mr. PAYNE: Subclause (5) of clause 12 reads—

“If he has no home therein, or has abandoned his intention to return to what was previously his home therein, he is not a resident.”

If a man is not a resident of an electorate he cannot get a vote. In Central Queensland, 80 per cent. of the people have no home of their own. I take it that if they were staying at one hotel and went to another hotel they would not be fixed residents there. A man may be on a station for three months, and he may have to go to another station because his work is completed—it is generally temporary work on a station unless it is boundary riding or something of that nature—he may be three months working on this station, and then go 100 miles away to another station in the same electorate, and stay only a month there. He may never be outside his electorate, and yet he has never one place he can call his own. That is not provided for.

The HOME SECRETARY: Nonsense!

Mr. PAYNE: So, in the first place, the residence qualification alone disfranchises some of the best men and women in Queensland, and still this Tory Government tell us that they believe that every man and woman who is entitled to the franchise should get a vote. I claim that the residence qualification alone wipes the whole thing out. Then, under clause 39, an elector outside his electorate cannot vote, unless he has knowledge months previously that he is going to be outside the electorate, and can make an application for a postal vote before he leaves. I understand that is the reading of the clause. I claim that the whole trend of this legislation is to create industrial upheavals and trouble. Hon. members on the Treasury benches do not seem to understand it. Almost every bit of legislation they have brought in has a tendency to create breaches between employees and employers. Take the case of a shed, say 20 miles outside the Mitchell electorate, with 100 men. Fifty or sixty of those men may be Mitchell voters. They would have no idea they were going to be there on election day. A man may go to a shed, and, in the ordinary course of affairs, in dry weather he knows when they will cut out; but I have known plenty of sheds within two days of being cut out, as they thought, and they have been there for three weeks—a dash of rain comes on and they are stopped. A man who follows ordinary station work, unless he is a permanent hand, has not the remotest idea of where he will be on an election day. Fifty or sixty of my electors may be work-

[7.30] p.m. ing at a certain place, but they are not going to stop there, and no power on earth can keep them there. The Home Secretary may think that by means of his Industrial Peace Bill he can keep them there. He could not keep them there if he sent up fifty or sixty policemen to do it. These men will leave, with the result that the contractor shearing the sheep and the owner of the station, both of whom have a lot of men engaged, will lose the

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services of these men. These men will then say, "It's very rough; why don't you have a polling-booth here?" I understand from the Home Secretary that it is very easy to have polling-booths at these stations. I can show you that it is not easy. At the last general election in Queensland, when I got up to my electorate, I discovered that there was a polling-booth at Coreena Station and none at the woolshed, 7 miles away. There were 140 men at the woolshed, and only two or three females at the station, and I thought it was only right that the polling-booth should be at the woolshed. I sent an urgent wire straight away to the Home Secretary's office. I did not ask him to make a new polling-booth. I only asked him to change the polling-booth from the station to the woolshed, and the reply I got from the Home Secretary was, "Too late."

The HOME SECRETARY: That is quite correct; it was too late.

Mr. PAYNE: I had not the remotest idea that such a state of affairs existed until I got up there. I also found that at Beaconsfield Station there were some sixty men engaged as shearers and shed hands and musterers, and so forth, and there was no polling-booth there. I made application for Beaconsfield to be made a polling-booth, and back came the same answer, "Too late." It is a most remarkable thing that the more stumbling blocks you put in the way of men in the West recording their votes, and the more inconvenient you make it for them to get to the polling-booth, the more determined they are to vote. So far as Beaconsfield was concerned, the result was that all those men rode 18 miles into Ilfracombe and recorded their votes. The result of the men leaving the station was that some ill-feeling was shown between the employer and the employees, and some bad blood resulted. All this would have been avoided if Beaconsfield had been made a polling-place. With regard to Coreena, I went to Mr. Miller, the manager, myself, and he said it was a shame that they did not make a polling-place at the woolshed. Mr. Miller does not vote Labour—you could not expect him to vote Labour—and it was his opinion that there should be a polling-place at the woolshed. There would have been no trouble about the appointment of a presiding officer or other official, because all that was wanted was to transfer the polling-place from the station to the woolshed, 7 miles away; but I was told that it was too late. The result was that a good number of these people had to walk 7 miles to record their votes, and it caused no end of inconvenience. All the talk about the Home Department not finding it convenient to appoint a presiding officer and a poll clerk was all moonshine.

The HOME SECRETARY: Your suggestion was to break the law.

Mr. PAYNE: I only pointed out what was wanted as soon as I knew that there was no polling-place at the woolshed.

The HOME SECRETARY: It was all your own neglect. You should have made application in time.

Mr. PAYNE: I had no knowledge such a thing existed till I got there. When I am in Brisbane, I am 1,000 miles away from my electorate, and surely to goodness the Home Department ought to take that into consideration. All I asked was that the polling-

booth should be shifted from the station to the woolshed, a distance of 7 miles, on the same property.

The HOME SECRETARY: Your application was too late according to the law.

Mr. PAYNE: If that kind of thing can exist in our present electoral law, there is a greater opportunity for it to exist under the more drastic provisions of this Bill. I claim that this postal vote provision, which will prevent a man from recording his vote if he is outside the electorate, will disfranchise the very best men and women in Queensland. Still, this Tory Government and its supporters say, "We do not want to disfranchise any man." They talk about giving the sick, the lame, the blind, and the halt the vote, and yet they actually deprive many men and women of a vote under this postal-voting system. Men who have travelled all over the Commonwealth, as I have done, know that in the Western districts there are many men and women—the pioneers who have blazed the track—who, because they cannot read or write, will be deprived of the chance of using the postal vote. If they cannot write their names on a postal vote, they will not be allowed to vote at all. The hon. member for Rockhampton referred to the absent voting provisions as existing in New Zealand, and under that system every man and woman can record their votes. It has also been proved that under our State absent voting system we have absolutely the clearest and best method of voting, bar going to the poll itself.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is quite incorrect.

Mr. THEODORE: Perfectly true.

The HOME SECRETARY: Quite incorrect.

Mr. PAYNE: That is very like the statement we heard a few days ago, that there were thousands of people who voted twice, yet we know from what transpired since that the hon. member did not know what he was talking about. I challenge the Home Secretary and his supporters to prove that there was ever one instance of a corrupt vote being given under the absent voting system. The absent voting system is so perfect that it is impossible for any corruption to take place. When a man applies for an absent voter's vote, he has to answer certain questions, and he has got to sign his name. It was the absent voting system that proved that a forgery was committed in connection with the Port Curtis election, as we know from the signature on the vote that the affidavit made by the man O'Connor in Rockhampton was a forgery. It is not possible for any corruption to take place under the present absent voting system. It could be extended so that provision could be made for it to apply to the sick, the lame, the blind, and the halt, and the whole thing would be perfect, but we know very well that that is not the intention of the present Government. We know very well it is not the intention of the Government to make it easy for a great number of voters to record their votes in Queensland, and that is why this Bill has been brought in. The leader of the Opposition dealt very ably indeed with the question of a man who went away for a holiday and returned having to wait twelve months before he could get on to the roll again. It would be quite possible for a native of Queensland to live in Queensland all his life, and then go away for a three or six months' holiday, and then on

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returning find his name wiped off the roll, and he would have to wait sixteen months before he could get on again.

The HOME SECRETARY: No; because he had not abandoned his home.

Mr. PAYNE: One of the questions that he is asked is, "Have you bona fide and continuously resided in Queensland for the last preceding twelve months?" That shows that a man would have to wait sixteen months before he could get a vote.

Hon. R. PHILP: Nonsense.

Mr. PAYNE: It is not nonsense. He would have to be two months in the electorate before he could apply, and he would have to answer the question that he has resided in Queensland for the preceding twelve months, and it would take another two months before he could get on the roll. That is the way they are going to give an opportunity for the men and women of Queensland to record their votes.

The HOME SECRETARY: You are just erecting some "Aunt Sallys" to knock down.

Mr. PAYNE: I only believe what I read. (Laughter.) I say that you may be a native of Queensland, and yet if you went away for three or six months and your name happened to be wiped off the roll while you were absent, when you came back you would have to put in twelve months' residence before you could be enrolled again. The Government claim that they are doing all they can to see that every man and woman has a vote. Why, then, do they not make the qualification six months' residence as the National Parliament have done? This Bill has been brought in in a hasty manner; it is panic legislation, and is brought in because of the result of the last Federal election. This Tory Government know very well that unless they place very great obstacles in the way of electors getting on the roll and exercising the franchise, those electors will wipe them out for ever.

* Mr. GRAYSON (*Cunningham*): I regard the Bill as an intelligent attempt, not only to secure clean election, but also to purify the rolls. The hon. member for Mitchell is of opinion that the Government have introduced this Bill because of the result of the recent Federal election. I can tell the hon. member and other hon. members opposite that I heard the Premier state last session—not in the House—that he intended during this Parliament to bring in an amending Elections Bill.

Mr. RYAN: Was that at the caucus?

Mr. GRAYSON: It may have been at the caucus. Bills of this kind are discussed at the Labour caucus, and why should they not be discussed at a Government caucus?

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: You have a caucus, then?

Mr. GRAYSON: Of course we have a caucus, and excellent business is done at the caucus meetings. A great deal has been said by hon. members opposite as to the supposed attitude of members on this side of the House who voted for the abolition of the postal vote in 1911. I may tell the House that if the same system of postal voting was proposed in this Bill as was previously in force, I should strenuously oppose it; but, in my opinion, the postal vote as provided for in this measure is so safeguarded that it will not be open to abuse,

and it will enable many very old colonists who would otherwise be disfranchised to record their votes. During the last Federal election a farmer who had been resident in the Warwick district for sixty years was laid up in the local hospital. He had voted at every election previously, and the last Federal election was the only one at which he was deprived of his vote. It is quite true that a polling-booth was established at the hospital, but only convalescents could go there and record their votes, and, as he was confined to his bed, he was deprived of the franchise.

Mr. KIRWAN: What district was he a resident of?

Mr. GRAYSON: He resided at Freestone Creek, in the Warwick district, and he was an elector of the Warwick electorate.

Mr. RYAN: The Labour party got a majority in Warwick, didn't they?

Mr. GRAYSON: I did not follow the totals. The only reply I can give to the interjection of my hon. friend is that in the Cunningham electorate the Liberals had a majority of 1,300. I do not worry myself about what happens in the leader of the Opposition's electorate, or in the member for Warwick's electorate. Personally, I am in favour of the postal vote system with the safeguards provided in this Bill.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: The same safeguards were supposed to be in the old Act.

Mr. GRAYSON: Not at all. I know hundreds of persons in the town of Warwick who, under the old Act, voted by post, though they lived within a stone's throw of a polling-booth. I have no sympathy whatever with the suggestion that females who live within a reasonable distance of a polling-booth should be allowed to record their votes by post. The persons that I sympathise with are the men who are pioneering in country districts, and who are, as the hon. member for Mitchell said, "blazing the track"—blazing the track for Labour members to go out canvassing the electors in the country. As one who has lived in country districts for the last fifty years, I should just like to say that the boundary rider, who votes Labour every time, can jump on his horse and ride to the nearest polling-booth, whether it is 5 or 10 miles away, and record his vote without any trouble. But his wife cannot vote in that way. A selector with moderate means who takes up land may not be able to buy a sulky or a spring-cart to convey himself and his family to town, and what opportunity would the wife of that selector have of recording her vote, unless some such provision is made as that which is proposed in this Bill?

Mr. LAND: Not one in a hundred persons in the district you are talking about can use the postal vote under this Bill.

Mr. GRAYSON: I know what I am talking about, and what I have stated is perfectly correct. The hon. member for Mitchell said he knew shearers on a certain station who had to lose a day's shearing in order to ride to the nearest polling-booth to record their votes, because a polling-booth was not established at the station where they were working. I may tell the hon. member that when I was on the board I had to lose a day's shearing more than once in order that I might be able to go and record my vote. The hon. member for Cambooya has done

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likewise. At the same time, I am quite in accord with the member for Mitchell that polling-places should be provided where there are a certain number of electors, whether they are shearers, rouseabouts, or selectors. The hon. gentleman complained about the Home Department not providing polling-places during the last election. I was refused two polling-places in my electorate because my application was put in too late. But I must say, in justice to the Home Department, that, if anybody appeals to the Home Secretary for a polling-booth in good time, and he can show good and sufficient reasons for his application, a polling-booth is invariably granted.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

Mr. GRAYSON: I listened very attentively to the speech of the leader of the Opposition, and I must say that he made a very able speech from his point of view. There was one matter he referred to and which appealed to me. When the Bill is in Committee I hope provision will be made for a certain class of electors who change their place of residence during shearing time, so that they may be able to record their votes on election day. I am referring to those shearers who remove from one shed to another, and who, perhaps, may move to an electorate in which they have not a vote. My opinion is that those shearers should apply to the Home Secretary for a polling-booth, and that at every centre where there are likely to be at least a dozen men, they should be given an opportunity to record their votes. I notice that clause 14 makes provision for the publication of names that are to be put on the electoral roll. That is a very wise provision and will be a great preventive of roll-stuffing.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: A good thing for the newspapers.

Mr. GRAYSON: It will be money well spent. I have not heard a member on the Opposition side say one word against it. I notice that the returning officer is to publish the name of the successful candidate in the local paper. That is a wise measure, and will save candidates, especially in country districts, attending the declaration of the poll. Provision is made for a new method of voting, and I think the method should be of a similar nature throughout the Commonwealth. Personally, I have no hesitation in saying that I am in favour of the old system of striking out the name; but now the Commonwealth has decided on the system of putting a cross opposite the name, I suppose that we should adopt the same system. I notice the contingent vote is to be continued.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: It should be compulsory.

Mr. GRAYSON: I, too, think the contingent vote should be compulsory, if there are three candidates nominated for only one vacancy.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: Hear, hear!

Mr. GRAYSON: I am also in favour of the abolition of the Elections Tribunal. Fortunately, I have not had an election petition lodged against me.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: You are very lucky.

Mr. GRAYSON: I know the hon. member for Pittsworth speaks feelingly, and any member who has escaped an election petition is very lucky. In my opinion, the provisions

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in this Bill render it a great improvement on the old Act, and, with certain amendments, I believe the Bill will pass safely through the House. I have listened very attentively to the speeches from the other side, and must honestly confess that their criticisms are very mild indeed.

The HOME SECRETARY: Very flat.

Mr. GRAYSON: There are some of their big guns to speak yet. The hon. member for Herbert and the deputy leader of the Opposition have not yet spoken. So far, I think the Home Secretary ought to be very pleased indeed at the mildness of the criticism that has been levelled against the Bill.

Mr. THEODORE: He has been squirming all the evening.

The HOME SECRETARY: Squashed, absolutely.

Mr. GRAYSON: My object in supporting the Bill is simply this: I want to see clean elections and pure rolls. I wish to take this opportunity of saying that I think the police officers in the country districts of Queensland deserve the greatest praise for the manner in which they collect names and put them on the roll. I know in my own electorate—and mine is a fairly large one—that many hundreds of electors would be disfranchised every election were it not for the energetic way in which the police collect names. I would, also, in speaking about the police, like to say that in my opinion, although they are entitled to the franchise, they do not parade their political views when they collect names for the roll. I wish to mention specially the impartial way in which the police collect those names and have them placed on the roll.

Mr. THEODORE: The Home Secretary has prevented them from collecting the names this year.

The HOME SECRETARY: You are making an absolutely misleading statement, and you know it.

Mr. GRAYSON: Last Saturday week a policeman called at my house soliciting names for the roll. The police officer went into the kitchen and got the name of my servant girl. She was from New South Wales. That does not confirm the statement of the leader of the Opposition. The police are most energetic in my district, and they are making a daily canvass to get all the names they possibly can placed on the roll.

Mr. KIRWAN (*Brisbane*): Before I proceed to deal with the main principles contained in this very important measure that has been submitted for our serious consideration and criticism, I may be pardoned for referring to one or two statements that have been made by the hon. member for Port Curtis. He threw across the floor of this

House an accusation that members [8 p.m.] on this side now and again find time to attend to the business of the House. The accusation is totally unjustifiable, and the division lists of this House prove that, as far as attendance and attending to the business of the country are concerned, the Opposition compares more than favourably with the party that the hon. member follows. At any rate, it is not necessary for the leader of the Opposition to send out motor-cars for his followers when an important division is being taken. The hon. mem-

ber also said, I believe, that, generally speaking, members on this side of the House were inclined to use language in debate that did not reflect to their credit nor tend to uphold the dignity of this honourable House. The hon. member is evidently making strong and strenuous claims in order that the mantle of the late hon. member for Woolloongabba may fall on his shoulders. If I may be permitted to express an opinion, I think the hon. member will prove a worthy successor in every respect to that late member of this House. The hon. member for Cunningham, in dealing with this Bill, pointed out that the police were collecting the names of eligible voters in his electorate. About three weeks ago, when I found that the police were going round my electorate and other suburban electorates with the object of purifying the rolls, since this Government pretends to be so anxious that every eligible voter shall have his name placed on the roll, I asked the Home Secretary would he issue instructions that these police should secure, at the same time, the names of those who were qualified to vote, and have them placed on the electoral roll. The hon. gentleman, in reply, assured me that it was then too late to issue those instructions. Might I ask him, did he issue those instructions in Warwick or in the Cunningham electorate? If the police up there are collecting names, it is rather strange that they are not also collecting them in the metropolitan area.

The HOME SECRETARY: I would point out that this is a particular request which the police were instructed to carry out.

Mr. KIRWAN: The public outside may well form an opinion as to the value of any statement that may be made by the Home Secretary on that particular point. We have heard a lot to-night about the old pioneers of Queensland who blazed the track being entitled to vote. There is no member sitting on this side who has any other wish. But what about the men who blazed the track in Queensland in years gone by, who are now unfortunately within the precincts of a certain Government institution? If those pioneers of whom members on the other side talk—and talk is cheap—are entitled to vote, why not extend the franchise to those who are in Dunwich?

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER: Are they not being cared for by the Government.

Mr. KIRWAN: Certainly they are, but only cared for by the State as any State worthy of the name of a civilised nation or a Christian community would care for its aged and its infirm.

Mr. HUXHAM: It is a sin to be old.

Mr. KIRWAN: Evidently. Some hon. members consider they are giving a great concession. Does the hon. member for Maryborough suggest that when these old people are no longer able to work and have no relatives able to support them that the Government should knock them on the head? Many reasons have been adduced for this measure, and we have the same old cry from the Government benches. There is nothing original about it. In the reasons which prompted the Cabinet, when they drew up the Governor's Speech, to make special reference to this measure, in what I regard as a very insulting paragraph, and in the whole burden of the song of the Home Secretary, there is nothing original. We find even as far back as the year 1432—that is a good few years ago—it was found necessary to introduce a measure more or less on the lines of

the Bill which the Home Secretary is responsible for. I might be permitted to quote from an old Act to bear out what I have said, that the Home Secretary is only repeating old canards culled from history, and which have always been used by the particular class he so ably represents in this House when their privileges have been assailed. In the preamble of an Act passed in 1432 we find these words—

“The election of knights hath of late been made by outrages, and excessive numbers of people, many of them of small substance and value, yet pretending a right equal to the best knights and esquires, whereby manslaughter, riots, batteries, and divisions among the gentlemen and other people shall very likely rise and be, unless due remedy be provided.”

And the remedy was a Bill somewhat similar to the one which the Home Secretary has introduced here—a Bill intended to disfranchise a certain section of the people—to prevent that section of the people from exercising their undoubted and God-given right to vote against the then occupants of the Treasury benches. Coming down a little later, we find that Lord Stanley, in introducing the Irish Registration Bill in the House of Commons in 1840, said that a number of names had found their way by illegitimate means on to the electoral roll, and as a rule there was bribery, corruption, and perjury. The same old statement with regard to the case and the same old justification for depriving a large section of the people of the right to vote! Unfortunately for a section of the Irish people at that time, they decided to vote against a certain dominant party, and when that party found they could not secure the return of their representatives—like the present Government at the last Federal elections—when they found their party practically annihilated in Queensland, they come along with this measure and take all sorts of care to secure their position on the Treasury benches by following exactly similar lines to those adopted in 1432, and by Lord Stanley in the British House of Commons in 1840. Have they found that these Acts have prevented the onward march of democracy? Do the occupants of the Treasury benches imagine that by passing a Bill of this kind, which is going to disfranchise a section of voters in Queensland, who are justly entitled to exercise the franchise as Queensland citizens—do they imagine by doing this, that they are going to stop the onward march of the Labour movement and secure the Treasury benches to their party for all time? If they do, they certainly misread history. I venture to say that there are men in the West against whom this measure is particularly directed. I have in my mind's eye at present an instance where one of these electors, a blind man, walked 20 miles to register his vote for the hon. member for Warrego. And this is the spirit that has made the Labour party, and this is the Government that thinks it can kill that spirit. We are told by some hon. members on the other side that they believe in democracy. I think that it would be truer if they said, “We believe in this party being in power, and we are prepared to take all sorts of means, as far as our majority in this House will allow us to do, to preserve in power that party.” We have heard them during this debate expressing great fears that some women would not be allowed to vote unless the postal vote again

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was introduced, yet we know that when on several occasions hon. members representing this party on Thursday afternoons, by specific motion, moved for amendment of the Elections Act to include women, all these stalwart Tories or their immediate predecessors talked them out. It is a well known fact that one Minister earned for himself the name of "The Minister for Thursday afternoon," and on one occasion gave as his reason that scurrilous line from Pope, "Every woman is at heart a rake."

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. KIRWAN: I am very sorry if I have transgressed any rule of the House.

The SPEAKER: I would suggest to the hon. member that he should discuss the Bill and the principles contained in the Bill. His last remarks have reference to incidents of twenty years ago.

Mr. KIRWAN: I am just trying to connect the Government which is at present so excessively taken up with the desire that every woman shall record her vote with the Government that blocked the women from getting the vote until they could no longer accomplish it. Now, take the questions that are provided to be asked of claimants for enrolment. It is rather strange that in the other States and in the Commonwealth the electoral claim form is made as simple as possible, but this Government sets out to make it as complex as possible and ask all manner of ridiculous questions. I do not know how they will fare with the average lady of the community—whether they will insist that she shall put her age on the electoral claim, to be duly advertised throughout the length and breadth of the land. Then we have the section with regard to residence. It was contended by the hon. member for Mitchell that, if a person left Queensland for a three months' trip or a six months' trip, notwithstanding that he might have been one of those old pioneers in whom so much interest recently has been taken by hon. members on the Government benches, that same person would have to reside in Queensland for fully sixteen months on his return before he would be able to record his vote. The hon. member for Townsville distinctly states that would not be possible. When the leader of the Opposition the other night was pointing out that the postal vote would not be available to a large section of the community, the hon. member for Charters Towers disagreed with him. These two disagreements—the one on the part of the hon. member for Charters Towers with the leader of the Opposition, and the other on the part of the hon. member for Townsville with the hon. member for Mitchell—only go to prove that there are Government supporters who cannot imagine that this Bill is so drastic as it is. They cannot believe that any Government would be guilty of bringing in a measure that would have such an effect as this, so far as wholesale disfranchisement is concerned. We see in this Bill a kindly regard for the property-owner as against the man with a residence. I know that in the Brisbane electorate at the last election, when it was found that there was going to be a Labour candidate, there was a wholesale rush to get in property-owners who could be spared from the electorates of the hon. member for Bulimba and the hon. member for Toowong and the hon. member for Toombul, and so on, but they did not get sufficient to effect their

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purpose. That, however, does not say that these people at the next election might not bring in 200 or 300 from Toombul, where the hon. member has such a majority that he could well spare that number, and still be returned with a large majority; and there are quite a number who live in Paddington who know that their vote is no use because they cannot shift the Labour representative. These people could all be transferred into Brisbane twenty-four hours before the election. What for? And then the Hon. the Home Secretary gets up, and through "Hansard," desires to assure the people of Queensland that the Government are not in favour of swamping any electorate. He does not expect the intelligent members of this House to give any credence to his statement, but there are doubtless a good section of the community who will read the statement in the Press, who have not studied the Bill and have had no opportunity of discussing its provisions, who would accept the statement of a responsible Minister of the Crown and believe that the Government are anxious that there should be no undue swamping of any electorate. Under this Bill there is nothing to prevent Brisbane being swamped so that it might be possible for the Government to win back that seat. We know that on the last occasion they were very sore about the defeat. We know that the police were out for ten weeks trying to hunt up a case against myself, and, notwithstanding the fact that their work was checked, not once, but twice and thrice, I am here in spite of all the opposition that there was against me, and in spite of the attempt made by that party to upset me when I had been duly elected. I certainly desire to give credit to the Home Secretary for introducing a uniform system of voting. I am only sorry that he did not go a bit farther and have the surnames only on the ballot-paper. I think it would be a very wise provision, and, just to give an illustration why I argue in that particular way, I might mention that at the last Brisbane election there were people who recorded their votes somewhat in this way. They saw on the ballot-papers the names "Forrest, Edward Barrow," and "Kirwan, Michael Joseph." A number of people did not know "Edward Barrow," but they knew "Forrest." They struck out "Edward Barrow," and they left "Forrest" in, and they struck out the whole of my surname and the whole of my Christian names.

Mr. BOOKER: That is a reflection on the voters.

Mr. KIRWAN: It may be, as the hon. member for Wide Bay suggests, a reflection on the voters, but it only goes to show that there are many electors who get confused, and I think, if they had only the two names "Forrest" and "Kirwan," or as the case may be, they would know the candidates by those names, and be able to vote without a mistake. The same thing, I believe, occurred in the Chillagoe electorate on one occasion, when a candidate there had for his Christian names two well-known surnames, and the result was that the people crossed out the two Christian names, and left his actual surname standing by itself. They crossed out the whole of the Labour candidate's surname, and his Christian name as well.

Mr. HARDACRE: There have been cases like that in all the electorates.

Mr. KIRWAN: I hope the Government will be prepared in Committee to accept

an amendment to have only the surnames on the ballot-paper, except in cases where two people of the same name put up, when it would be necessary to distinguish them by their Christian names. Now we come to the question of rowdy meetings. Both outside on a public platform, and in this House, I have expressed my opinion that it is advisable at all times to listen to a candidate giving expression to his views—that, if the electors disagree with some candidate who uses anything but choice language, and who is guilty of the most contemptible misrepresentation and is a past master in the art of mendacity, they should rise in a body and quit the hall and leave the candidate to himself, which would be much better than expressing their disapproval by continuous interjections. However, this provision will react on the Government. I am not afraid of this clause. The Liberal candidate who gets one or two electors locked up and fined will find he has done something that will hit him on election day, and not the Labour party.

Mr. GRANT: The Federal Labour party introduced that in their Elections Bill.

Mr. KIRWAN: We hear remarks, whenever a principle of this kind is being discussed, that the Labour party introduced it, but, if you analyse it, you will find the principle is entirely different. We will test some of those hon. members opposite in Committee by submitting some of the provisions contained in the Commonwealth Act. Then we shall find them trooping in and standing behind the Home Secretary when the division bell rings, proving, after all, there may be some justification for referring to them as political humbugs. While it has been proved that it will be a wise procedure to wipe out the old system of elections tribunals, I still think the Government might have gone a little further, and in cases where the judge has given a certificate to the effect that the election was rendered void by some mistake or other on the part of the returning officer, the legal expenses, or whatever other expenses are incurred by both candidates, should be paid out of the consolidated revenue. I do not think it is fair, simply because the Government have nominated an incompetent official to act as returning-officer, that either of the candidates should be compelled to go to the expense of testing the case before the judge, and after that be put to the further expense of another election, when, if the official who had the management of the election had been properly qualified, the mistake would never have occurred.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: It would encourage litigation.

Mr. KIRWAN: I cannot agree with the hon. member that it would encourage litigation. At any rate, it would stand for justice. It has been suggested that, instead of putting the initials of the presiding officer on the ballot-paper, as heretofore, he is going to put a number. If the number of the voter is 1008 on the ballot-paper, immediately opposite his name on the roll which the presiding officer has, the number 1008 will be put.

The HOME SECRETARY: No. It all depends on what his number is on the electoral roll. The number on the ballot-paper is not necessarily the same as the number on the electoral roll.

Mr. KIRWAN: That is what I am trying to get at. By way of illustration, we will say the number of an elector is 540 on the roll, and he is the 570th elector to vote that day: Is it not correct to say that 570 will be put opposite that elector's name?

The HOME SECRETARY: No; his number on the electoral roll.

Mr. KIRWAN: Then, in the event of an Elections Tribunal case the number for the purpose of the identification of a voter will not be the number on the roll, but the number on the ballot-paper?

The HOME SECRETARY: No, the number on the roll and the number of the ballot-paper—the one follows the other. The two form the identification.

Mr. KIRWAN: I must admit that I cannot follow the Home Secretary.

The HOME SECRETARY: The number on the ballot-paper will also be placed on the roll.

Mr. KIRWAN: That is what I am contending. What I want to ask is this: How big will the names be printed in the new roll to allow of that being done? Does the hon. gentleman seriously contend that with the present type in use in our ordinary electoral roll, an official, no matter how expert he is in making figures—and he will have to make them very minutely—can place the number opposite the name of each elector on the ballot-paper? If that is necessary to be done in future, we shall have to print the electoral roll in very large type; otherwise, there will be serious confusion.

The SPEAKER: This is purely a matter of detail which can be considered in Committee.

Mr. KIRWAN: I have another suggestion to make. If the Home Secretary is anxious that people should have an undoubted right to exercise the franchise, it would perhaps be better, to make the thing certain, to draw a line under the name of each candidate, so that, if people put a cross, so long as it is between those two lines, it should count even if it is not in the square, because we know that sometimes the square is not made large enough. Then, in regard to the cancellation of polling-places, this is another method by which a Home Secretary, who might be a strong partisan, would be able to deal a blow at a political opponent. I do not suggest that the present holder of the office would stoop to methods of that kind, but if he were desirous of doing so, this clause would give him the opportunity. I do not think it is advisable, after the writs are issued, to cancel any polling-places, and if returning officers knew their duties, they would revise their polling-places as population spreads in the meantime. Before the writs are issued, returning officers should revise the polling-places, as, owing to new settlement having taken place, it may be necessary to have a new polling-booth at a particular place. Or perhaps, owing to the fact that a mining field, on which there were 150 electors at the last general election, had worked out, and the miners had been transferred to a new field, it might be advisable that the polling-place should be cancelled and a new one instituted. I had an experience myself in this matter. The hon. member for Paddington had a polling-place on Spring Hill at the Leichhardt Street School, and I applied to have the necessary officer put in there, in order that people who lived on the borders of both electorates might be

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enabled to vote in Spring Hill without going to the Temperance Hall in town, but I was told that one polling-booth was sufficient. The Home Secretary, or his responsible advisers, did not display any great anxiety to study the convenience of the women living in the Spring Hill district on that occasion, because it happened to be a Labour stronghold. It was not advisable to give these facilities to vote. On the other hand, it was compulsory that they should go to the city. The Government say they believe in democracy and are desirous of getting the views of the people of Queensland at every general election, and every facility should be given in the way of providing polling-booths, and opportunities for those who are entitled to be on the roll to get on the roll. We do not want any of these provisions such as are forecasted in this particular measure, which, if it becomes law, will have the result, first of all, of making it as difficult as possible for people to get on the roll, and when they get on the roll making it just as difficult, in case they follow certain occupations, for them to record their vote.

This is the stamp of measure [8.30 p.m.] which comes from the Government benches, and hon. members opposite ask this House to believe that it has been prompted by a sincere desire on their behalf to purify the rolls. We know perfectly well that all their wild statements about corruption, double voting, impersonation, and everything else, in connection with the last Federal election, have fallen absolutely to the ground. We know that the inquiry which was called for immediately the Federal Parliament met—called for by a Government belonging to the same party that members opposite belong to—has not justified any one of the Home Secretary's remarkable statements. Is the hon. gentleman going to apologise? Has he not based this very measure on the statements which he made on that occasion?

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

THE HOME SECRETARY: When the investigation is completed and the rolls are opened, then I will have something to say.

MR. KIRWAN: The Government on the Treasury benches in the National Parliament did not feel called upon to appoint a Royal Commission or anything of that kind, as it would not justify the wild statements of those who were suffering the pangs of defeat. I hope it will not be very long before the Government occupying the Federal Treasury benches will be out of office. I have nothing further to say, except to express my regret as a Queenslanders that I should see a Government on the Treasury benches who wish to resort to the tactics which were resorted to in the years I have mentioned, and I am sorry to say that they have got members to support them for the specific purpose of guaranteeing them a fresh lease of power by disfranchising a large section of the people of Queensland.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN (*Burrum*): I have some diffidence in rising to speak on the question now before the Chamber, because the very importance of it must make any hon. member who is fully seized of it halt and consider very carefully before he expresses an opinion. I listened with some interest to the various speakers, and I confess that generally there seems to be a desire that there should be a fair and equitable franchise throughout Queensland. I

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think there is an honest intention on the part of most members to endeavour to obtain that end, but hon. members not infrequently, in regard to principles of this kind, are apt to lose sight of the great importance of the principle involved in the statements they make. To my mind, there is no more important matter than this honourable House could be asked to deal with than an Elections Act. It is greater and more important than the Constitution itself, because, after all, the Constitution under which we live is to a great extent a dead thing. The Constitution is only really galvanised into life and into being through the express will and wish of the people as expressed through Parliament. Consequently, my opinion is that in dealing with Parliament and with the constitution of Parliament, which is another way of interpreting the Elections Act, we are really dealing with the very basic principle of constitutional government and of responsible government. We should think of the privileges appertaining to the position we occupy in Queensland or in Australia. Hon. members who are opposed to this matter have sought to show how the Government were endeavouring to prevent people from recording their votes, and endeavouring to prevent people from getting on the roll. I do not for one single moment attribute to any party or to any Government such an unworthy motive. It is equally important that we should recognise that it is right that everybody entitled to it should get his name on the roll, and use the franchise to which they are justified and qualified. It is also equally important that we should take steps to prevent the use of the franchise by those people who are not entitled to it. That is an aspect of the question which has not been dealt with by our friends opposite. They have sought to make out a case to the people outside against the present Government as being anxious to harass the outside people by preventing them from getting on the roll, but they have not for one single moment shown the slightest desire to safeguard the rights and privileges of those identical people outside by allowing people to come in and interfere with the Government of this country who have no right to do so. After all, that is an equally important matter. We know how frequently the very greatest matters turn on little things. We know how not infrequently the history of a country may be determined by a single vote. We have seen in the history of Australia how an alteration has taken place in the Government by the loss of a single seat—and I am pleased to see it—and it is within the range of possibility that such a thing may occur at any time, and it might happen, as it has happened within the last few weeks. We have seen the socialist Government removed from their place of power in the National Parliament of Australia, after a carnival of high expenditure, and after a carnival of debauchery and expenditure, and after a long run of class legislation. We have seen all that pass away, only as the result of winning one seat. Fortunately, in this case, it has been a step into the breach just at the psychological moment by a Government which displaced another Government which had been there for the last three years, and this Government may possibly be able to repair something of what has been done by the late Government.

MR. HUXHAM: Only possibly.

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: I can only quote the opinion of a philosopher with regard to the individual—

“Every action that a man commits enters into the substance of his being, and he can never be afterwards what he was before.”

I also say with regard to the nation that with every enactment placed upon the statute-book, although it may be possible to some extent to repeal it and straighten matters out by a subsequent Government, still that nation can never afterwards be what it might have been under more beneficial legislation. I say that such a contingency might possibly happen in Queensland. It might be possible—though I trust it will not be—that through the exercise of a single vote to which a man or woman might not be legally entitled—it might happen through the exercise of that single vote, that we should see a socialistic Government on these Treasury benches. Let us calmly regard what would happen if such a calamity ever overtook Queensland. (Opposition laughter.) If we found a socialistic Government occupying the Treasury benches in Queensland they would at once begin to put into practice that platform of which they make such a proud boast.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: What about the man on the land then? (Opposition laughter.) Down comes their land tax on him. What about the working man in the country who owns his little freehold, and perhaps a house under the provisions of the Workers' Dwellings Act? All this would be swept away as the result of socialistic legislation. It is within the range of possibility that unless we put sufficient safeguards into this Elections Bill which we are discussing at the present time, it is possible that through some error—through perhaps the exercise of one vote by a person not so entitled to it—it might be possible that a socialistic Government would occupy these Treasury benches, and in putting their platform into practice show to us something of that mis-endeavour, if I may use such a term, and that feeling of indifference to the welfare of the country which has been shown by a socialistic Government in another place. We have a perfect right to safeguard the rights of the people in this young country in every way, and to make sure that those people coming into Queensland, whom we are going to take into partnership in this State of ours, whether they come from other States or from countries overseas, we have a perfect right to examine, and to make sure of their bonâ fides before we give them a voice in the management of this State's affairs.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Quite right.

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: It is perfectly right and perfectly reasonable. We should be just as unfair to the great mass of the people if we erred in the direction of allowing people to vote who should not vote as we should be in going to the other extreme, and passing legislation which would prevent people who are entitled to vote exercising the franchise.

AN OPPOSITION MEMBER: Why did you go to the Boer war?

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: I went to the Boer war to uphold the dignity of the British flag. I do not desire to enter upon

a detailed discussion of the contents of this measure. Most people will agree that, while it may not be a perfect measure, it goes a long way towards improving the present position of affairs. If I were asked to put my finger on the most salient feature of the arguments used by my learned friend, the leader of the Opposition, and right throughout the rank and file of his party, I should say that it is to be found in the one sentence, “Why do you not copy the Commonwealth Government?” It would be a most difficult thing to find in the history of any State or country having constitutional government, or in the history of any community having a franchise at all, a more deplorable state of affairs than obtained throughout the length and breadth of this country at the last Federal election.

Mr. KIRWAN: From the Tory point of view.

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: Does the hon. member know the meaning of the word “Tory”? Where are the Tories?

Mr. BARBER: On that side of the House.

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: How ridiculous! It is just about as foolish as to throw across this Chamber the word “conservative.” We are conservatives in one thing—we are conservatives of the public weal.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: But as far as the word Tory is concerned, it is puerile, ridiculous, and unworthy of the man who made the interjection. Is the Federal Electoral Act so perfect that we should copy it? Have members opposite shown that the Federal election law makes for perfect equality, or that it was perfectly smooth in its operation at the last Federal election—so perfect that it justifies us in copying that law? I think not. Indeed, I will go a step further and say, without any fear of contradiction, that the personnel of this present Parliament, embracing members on both sides of the House, is such that its members are in every way, intellectually and otherwise, just as well fitted, and possibly better fitted, to create an electoral system as are the members of the Federal Parliament. We are constantly hearing from members opposite about what the National Parliament has done, as if the National Parliament, merely because it happens to be a National Parliament, was composed of men of higher mental calibre than the members of this State Parliament. I say it is not. There are members in the Federal Parliament who failed to secure a seat in this Chamber. Does that show that the capacity required of a Federal member is greater than the capacity required from a member of the State Parliament? I say it does not, and I also affirm that the end of wisdom in this matter has not been reached by the Federal Government. There is no reason why, with the knowledge that we possess, and with the assistance of our friends opposite, we should not be able to bring into existence an electoral law, not only more workable and more liberal than the Federal law, but also one that will be more calculated to accomplish the object for which we are all labouring at the present time. Exception has been taken to the difference in the period of residence required in order to enable a person to become eligible for a vote in Queensland as compared with the period required by the

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Commonwealth Parliament. We are told that the National Parliament only asks for six months' residence to qualify a person for enrolment. We insist upon twelve months. I submit that we are just as competent to say which of those two periods is the better one as are members of the Federal Parliament. If we think that twelve months is better than six months, why should we follow the example of a body of men who are less competent to deal with our affairs than we are ourselves? I contend that we should not be acting rightly in doing so. We want a man to be twelve months in the State before allowing him to vote. Until a very short time ago the country which was always held up to us as an example was America. I am not aware that any country under the sun has shown such rapid expansion, commercially, industrially, and in other respects, as America has done during the last hundred years. But do hon. members opposite believe that they would get a vote in the United States after six months' residence? No; before you can become a citizen of the United States you have to show your bona fides by residing there for three years; and I contend that before a man is given a vote in Queensland he ought to prove his bona fides as a citizen of this State. Members on the opposite side of the House, and members on this side of the House, have expended their energies, their wealth, and their labour in Queensland, and have worked and suffered in the early stages of its development to build it up to its present position. Have they not a perfect right to command that he who comes in to share in the administration of the affairs of this State should, at all events, be more than a mere passing butterfly—that he has come here, it may be, without wealth, but with bone and sinew, so that he is not likely to be carried away, in a moment of mental aberration, and give a vote which might have the effect of putting into power a socialistic Government, bringing in its train a chapter of ruin and despair? Let us see how we propose to improve, through this measure, the present system. I say that, so far as Queensland is concerned, the qualification has not been materially altered. If we strike out the one solitary argument of the Commonwealth system, no valid reason has been given why six months should be substituted for twelve. We may well let the twelve months pass for a fair thing, for it is a fair thing that a man should show his bona fides in that way. Let me now come to the most brilliant feature in the whole Bill, and that is the inclusion of the postal vote. I am not going to labour this question, for you have already heard a good deal of it, but I cannot refrain from expressing my admiration for the present Government in showing such a healthy desire for the public welfare as to reinstate the postal vote.

AN OPPOSITION MEMBER: Are you serious, or are you only smiling?

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: I was never more serious in my life. This is not a matter for laughter by any means, and some of those people who will bless the present Government for the inclusion of the postal vote are not the people who will be smiling at our efforts. I say the present Government have shown a very keen desire to give everyone who is qualified to vote the right and privilege to exercise his vote. I am not going to quote the speech of

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the Hon. Andrew Fisher, the socialistic chief of the Commonwealth, in which he stated on the floor of the Federal House that he had spent years in Queensland trying to educate the people of this State up to the advantages of universal suffrage, of which the postal vote must form a necessary corollary.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Why did he review it?

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: During the recent federal campaign there was a great deal of discussion on this postal vote. At a meeting I happened to attend a prominent Labour man (he was not a member of Parliament) had a great deal to say on this question. When retiring from the hall this man was still carrying on the discussion, and I heard him remark in a loud tone of voice, "It is about time the Labour party did away with the postal vote; they have never won an election since they had it." I give you exactly the reason why the Labour party repealed it. It was simply that they could not win an election with it. And I say that that is one of the weakest reasons, perhaps, which characterises any election speeches coming from the other side. The reasons of hon. members on the opposite side for doing anything or not doing anything are not that the thing is right, or honest, or upright, or for the welfare of the country, but merely because it does not suit them. That is to say, it will not enable them to win an election. And I say that politics get down to a very low level indeed when any members of this Chamber allow themselves to be influenced, when dealing with electoral matters, by considering in what way these matters are going to assist them or their party. We want to look at these matters in the right light—whether they are honest, whether they are reasonable, or whether they are just. With regard to this postal vote, I must say that it is undoubtedly a change in the right direction. Probably some small amendments could improve it. I think it should be made more easy than it is at the present time. I dare say there may have been abuses in the past, but, after all, I would ask what harm those abuses had done. The two greatest abuses that I can imagine in the Federal legislation, or to occur under any electoral legislation, would be plural voting or personation. (Opposition laughter.) These are the two most important things, and if we take those two out, it does not matter a great deal how the others vote—that is, whether they vote by post or by ballot. In these days men, as a rule, do not care very much who knows how they vote, and all this cry about the secrecy of the ballot is rather overdrawn. We know very well that when it comes to polling-day each party flaunt their colours. If we can eliminate plural voting and personation, then we have gone a long way towards curing any ills which may have been brought into being in our electoral laws. I need not go over again the various reasons why we consider the postal vote necessary. They have been dealt with very fully on all sides, and we may rest assured that it will be sufficiently safeguarded to prevent its being used wrongly. The next most important matter referred to in the Bill is the alteration in the Elections Tribunal. I think the leader of the Opposition seemed to regard favourably the proposed change in that direction. He did not find fault with anything at all except with regard to the portion dealing with the elimination of the panel of assessors. Under the Bill the matter has to come before a District Court judge, or a Supreme Court judge, or a barrister or a solicitor of five

years' standing. The hon. member pointed out that he thought it would be [9 p.m.] an advantage to eliminate the barrister and solicitor element. It was no doubt a very effective display of sacrifice on his part, and incidentally, to my mind, it was an excellent suggestion. I am fully in accord with that idea. It is better from many points of view that we should have men altogether removed from any possible charge of bias, and I hope some alteration in that direction may be brought about. I do not know what the Government think about the matter, but it strikes me that the arguments of the leader of the Opposition in that regard are perfectly sound, and it is the practice of members on this side always to take notice of sound arguments and be guided by them. There were one or two matters mentioned by the hon. member for Curningham as possible improvements. One was with regard to preferential voting, and also in regard to the contingent vote. The hon. member said he thought it was desirable that this contingent voting should be made compulsory. That appears to me as being very reasonable, because there is one thing we should guard against, and that is that no member in this Chamber should represent a minority of the electors for his division, and without having a second ballot, as they have in New South Wales, the only way to accomplish that would be by making the contingent vote compulsory. We have heard a good deal, both in this Chamber and outside, on platforms and in the public Press, with regard to the introduction of a voter's right. Personally, I was rather hoping that some provision might be made in the Bill with regard to this matter. It strikes me as being a most effective and efficient way of securing an absolutely true record of the opinion of the voters. It would be a good thing in every way, and would lead not only to a purer roll, but to purer elections all through. However, as the Government have not thought it advisable to take the same view, and have not brought that forward, I can only express my regret, because I feel it would have done a lot to accomplish what we are trying to bring about at the present time. Broadly speaking, I think it will be conceded that this measure goes a long way towards removing many of the anomalies that exist at the present time.

Mr. HARDACRE: It will create more.

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: It may be as the hon. member for Leichhardt says, but he at all events has failed to show me that it would create more anomalies.

Mr. THEODORE: He has not spoken yet.

Lieut.-Colonel RANKIN: The hon. member has not spoken. I waited until a fair number of members on the other side had spoken, and I frankly confess that with the exception of one or two minor matters, no anomalies have been pointed out by speakers on the other side, nor do I think hon. members opposite have been guilty of bringing forward any very strong arguments against the measure as it stands. They have been comparatively innocent of levelling any charges, but they have tried to shew that this is a backward movement. I submit that it is not. It is a forward movement. Even if adopted in its present form, without amendments of any kind, it will have the effect of establishing a purer and better state of things at elections than we have at the present time. It is impossible to get away

from the fact that the dangers surrounding the carrying out of elections in a large scattered country such as this, are well nigh insuperable, and instead of trying, in a capacious spirit, to pick holes in what is brought forward, the time demands, the occasion demands, and the subject demands that we should try to bring to bear the best energy and the best mental effort that is in us, and so frame the Bill, and improve what is in it, that it may be worthy of the high purpose for which it is intended.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. THEODORE (*Chillagoe*): We have just had a rather curious instance of an hon. member of this House who claims to have certain democratic tendencies supporting with his very fervid oratory this retrograde step of the Government in the method of dealing with election matters. We have just had an hon. member who claims to be somewhat further advanced in democracy than most members on that side of the House backing and bolstering up, in apparently sincere language, this obvious attempt of the Government to disfranchise thousands of voters in Queensland. I consider the statement that the present Bill will broaden the franchise, and will give electoral freedom to people who have not been able to exercise the franchise as nothing but pure effrontery. For any person, having ordinary intelligence and having this Elections Bill before him, and after investigating it, to come to the conclusion that it broadens the franchise and gives electoral liberty to people who do not now possess the franchise, and that the Bill is justifiable on those grounds, then that person must be blinded by political prejudice, as there can be no other reason for his taking up that stand. It can only be explained by the assumption that the hon. member is possessed of colossal cheek or colossal ignorance.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER: It is only his honest opinion.

Mr. THEODORE: It is his opinion, and it is an opinion that at the present moment I am contesting, and which I am trying to confute, and the interpretation I am placing on the Bill is simply my opinion. I would point out that the hon. member for Burrum went to considerable pains to try and explain that members on this side are desirous of preventing certain electors from exercising the franchise—that in their opposition to the postal vote they are desirous of preventing sick women and sick persons generally from exercising the franchise, and that in that they are undemocratic, because they desire to oppose the proper extension of a franchise to include all adult persons having the necessary residential qualifications. The fact is that this proposal is an attempt to take away deliberately the franchise from those who have used it intelligently and who have not used it in a corrupt manner, so far as it has been explained in this Chamber—to take away the franchise from thousands of bona fide residents in this State, and persons who should have the franchise, if any person in this State should. These are persons in occupations which require them to become more or less nomadic, and who, because of the exigencies of their occupations, or because of other circumstances, find it necessary at some time of the year to leave the electorate in which they reside. For the sake of giving a few score of sick persons a vote, the party opposite are prepared to disfranchise 13,000 electors. There were 13,000

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absent voters who recorded their votes under the absent voters' provisions at the last general elections. A majority of these, I maintain, under the proposal introduced by the Government will be wholly disfranchised at the forthcoming election. And I want to give my reason for believing that. There were, as I have said, 13,000 who recorded their votes as absent voters at the last election. There were a considerably greater number of electors who were absent from their electorates, many of whom, of course, did not vote. But even taking into account the operation of the postal vote provision, and allowing for the small number of those persons who will be able to exercise their votes in that way, I contend that at least 10,000 or 11,000 will be absolutely disfranchised, because they will be absent from their districts before the date of the issue of the writ, and, consequently, will be unable to apply for the postal vote or to vote in any other way for the district for which they are enrolled. And these will all be disfranchised because the Premier and his supporters think that a few sick persons should exercise the vote.

Mr. COYNE: Their troubles about the sick persons!

Mr. THEODORE: Yes, that argument is a specious one. It would certainly be reprehensible to deprive reputable citizens of the franchise.

The PREMIER: How are they deprived of the franchise?

Mr. THEODORE: I have just been explaining. Any person who may be enrolled for a district may be absent when the writ is issued, and in consequence would be prevented from voting or applying for a postal voter's form.

The PREMIER: That is something which can be adjusted or amended easily enough.

Mr. THEODORE: That is something that is vital to the Bill at present. It is quite evident that the hon. gentleman is prepared to accept an amendment of that sort. Let the Opposition make the amendments it desires, and the Bill will leave the Chamber a good measure. (Laughter.) Accept the amendments suggested by this side, and there will be no opposition to the third reading. The Bill simply makes reference to the consolidated Acts, and any amendment with reference to it might be well moved and accepted in Committee. It is quite evident that the arguments used by hon. members on this side in regard to the disfranchisement of honest and deserving citizens, which is part and parcel of the present proposal, have had some effect on the hon. gentleman, and he is now prepared to limit the proposal. It is quite evident that he has been impressed by the arguments of hon. members, and he is not prepared to go as far as he was to disfranchise the electors.

The PREMIER: The object is not to disfranchise anybody. We want to enlarge the franchise. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. THEODORE: The strange thing is that hon. members opposite, before they heard the Premier's interjection that he would accept an amendment, claimed that the Bill enlarges the franchise. The hon. member for Burrum claimed that it was going to broaden the franchise, and other hon. members made the same contention. Now, let me point out to the Premier that it will be necessary for him, when he speaks on the second reading, to indicate exactly

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how he proposes to enable the nomadic workers, about whom I have been speaking, to exercise the vote. It would be far better to retain the absent voting provisions of the consolidated Acts as they are at present.

The PREMIER: Oh, no.

Mr. THEODORE: The hon. gentleman evidently does not propose to retain the absent vote provisions, yet he cannot show any valid reason why they should be repealed. Under the absent voting provisions there is every safeguard, and there has been no corruption at either of the two elections in 1909 and 1912 which have been conducted in Queensland under them. There has been no single case to which any hon. member of this Chamber has taken exception.

The PREMIER: Not necessarily corruption, but something to which this Bill will provide something superior.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER: And corruption, too.

Mr. THEODORE: There has been no criticism of the absent vote provisions until this session, and there has been no instance of irregularity pointed out by any hon. member; but it has been shown, as I have just shown, that in 1912 13,000 persons availed themselves of that method of voting. I want to point out that every possible safeguard is included in the consolidated Acts. The ballot-paper that is issued is issued to the elector within a polling-place, and he must record his vote within that polling-place and deposit it within a ballot-box in the polling-place. There can be no danger where there are those safeguards. There is every check consistent with ordinary common sense against impersonation or double voting, because the certificate has to be signed when the ballot-paper is handed to the voter, showing his qualification and where he is enrolled. And that is checked before the vote is counted. Where the ordinary precautions that are prescribed in the consolidated Acts are observed there can be no danger of corruption or irregularity, and the experience we have had in Queensland during the last two elections must show that the absent voting provisions are the best and safest means for persons absent from their electorates to cast their votes and thus exercise the franchise. Now, the Government claim that in this proposal they are actuated by a desire to broaden the franchise in every possible way, that they are actuated by sympathy for sick and disabled persons who cannot walk to a polling-place. It is strange, if they are really actuated by these high motives, that they have not made provisions for persons who now find it difficult to exercise the franchise, quite apart from sickness or disablement or anything of that kind. Why have they not made some provision to extend the qualification and enable people who are giving their best to this State, who are good citizens of this State, to take their share in the government of the country? Why have they not made provision to extend the franchise to those pioneers who have given of the best years of their lives to the development of this country, and who now are domiciled in some charitable institution supported by the State? Why have the Government not been sympathetic enough to extend the franchise to those persons and give them some say in the government of the country? Why have they disfranchised over 1,000 people in Dunwich, if they desire to see the franchise widened? Why does their

sympathy not extend to the persons who are domiciled there? That is a question that the Premier might deal with. The Home Secretary, when moving the second reading of this Bill, tried to explain why it was that the Government gave no votes to these people. He said, "Would you expect any Government to extend the franchise to people occupying a Government institution? Would you expect the Government to congregate them in one electorate, and then endow them with the franchise in such a manner that they might upset the settled policy of that particular electorate?" Why not? Are they to be disfranchised merely because their exercise of the franchise alters the representation of the district in which they are domiciled? Would that be a reason for disfranchising any person at all in this State? If it is an argument against the enfranchisement of the people in Dunwich, is it not an equally valid argument against the enfranchisement of public servants?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They can live in different electorates.

Mr. THEODORE: Frequently the Government commence public works and have in their employ hundreds of men in one electorate. Ipswich is an instance of this. In Ipswich there are aggregated hundreds of men, who by the exercise of the franchise sometimes alter the representation of the district. Is there any justice in disfranchising those persons simply because they were brought there by Government enterprise? There can be no validity in such an argument. The Home Secretary was utterly poverty-stricken for some excuse to justify the action of the Government for disfranchising the old pioneers in Dunwich, about which we have heard so much from hon. members in this House.

Mr. RYAN: It goes against the Treasurer—that is the trouble.

Mr. THEODORE: The possibilities are that the people of Dunwich would exercise their vote against the representative of the Government in the district in which Dunwich is situated. There is no doubt that that is the real reason why the people in Dunwich are disfranchised. The Government, or some members of the Government, really fear for the political skin of some prominent member with regard to this matter. That is the most sordid motive that could be imagined, emanating from hon. members sitting on that side, who claim to be inspired by the broadest motives and the highest ideals in bringing down this measure—the desire to enfranchise a number of sick women and persons who have been hitherto disfranchised.

Mr. FORSYTH: It is the same in other States.

Mr. THEODORE: The hon. member for Murrumba says it is done in no other State. I desire to correct him—it is done in other States, and in the Commonwealth itself.

Mr. FORSYTH: I say so myself. It is done in some States, but not in others.

Mr. THEODORE: I assure the hon. member that in the Commonwealth persons in receipt of Government aid have a vote. There are thousands of persons in the Commonwealth receiving charitable aid from the funds of the Commonwealth, and those persons have the full right to the franchise. The Government assert that they desire to broaden the franchise. If they were really desirous of broadening the franchise, why is

it they do not do something to enable persons to get on the roll more quickly and expeditiously than can be done at present? Why do they not simplify the process of getting on the roll? If they have a real desire to broaden the franchise and give freer representation to the people of Queensland, let them turn their attention to real election reform, and not tinker and tamper with the election machinery as they are doing in the present proposal. I want to ask the Home Secretary, if he is desirous of carrying out a democratic reform in regard to electoral machinery, why it is that this proposal does not in any way deal with the question of property qualification? In this present age, when everyone admits the right of everyone else who is possessed of ordinary common sense, who is not a lunatic or criminal, to have the right to a say in the government of the country if he possesses the necessary residence qualification—why is it we still allow a certain class to have privileges in that matter over all the rest of the community? Why is it that we give special privileges to the wealthy class?

Mr. FORSYTH: They only have one vote.

Mr. THEODORE: They have a vote which places them in a much more advantageous position than other electors. A person who possesses property up to a certain value in an electorate can be transferred to the roll for that electorate without all the harassing obligations of making application to a Registration Court, allowing his claim to be considered for two months, and submitting himself to inquisitorial investigation.

Mr. GUNN: He has to do that before he can get on the roll.

Mr. THEODORE: He does not do that before he transfers. All he has to do is to find out that he possesses property in a certain district, and he can have his vote transferred.

Mr. GUNN: He has to get on for the residential qualification still.

Mr. THEODORE: I want to point out to the hon. member, who has evidently not read the Bill, that persons who have property in the State of a certain value have privileges over persons who have not property of a like value. If they desire to transfer to the district in which they have property, they can do it without delay, without making out a new claim and becoming for the time being disenrolled for any district. Evidently the present Government upholds the principle of privileges to certain classes. We will make some attempt when we get into Committee to do away altogether with the principle of a property qualification. The Home Secretary, when moving the second reading of the Bill, said there was a provision in connection with persons claiming to get on the roll by virtue of a residence qualification requiring them to have resided for two months in the district. The principle reason, he said, for that was that they desired to prevent anything in the nature of swamping an electorate. Under the old provisions, no person could become transferred without a delay of at least four months, so whatever possible hope there could be of swamping an electorate under these circumstances is quite beyond the ordinary intelligence to understand. But granting that it may have some bearing upon it, why has he not seen fit to wipe out altogether the property qualification, which gives the very greatest

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facilities possible for swamping an electorate? Electors already enrolled, and possessing property in any electorate, can within twenty-four hours transfer their name to the roll of that district, showing that the greatest facilities are given to persons to transfer and that the greatest facilities are given for swamping the electorate.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It cannot be carried out.

Mr. THEODORE: I would mention the Brisbane electorate in the last general election, and also the Maryborough electorate. In Maryborough there were seventy-nine property-owners in Wide Bay who were electors of the Wide Bay electorate, and who transferred their names immediately before the day of the by-election on to the Maryborough roll.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER: That is not correct; there were forty-four.

Mr. THEODORE: I accept the correction. On the hon. member's admission, there were forty-four such cases. The Premier will see there is something in the statement that there are facilities for swamping an electorate, and I hope when we get into Committee that he will remedy that.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER: It took weeks to do that.

Mr. THEODORE: It did not take as long as it would require an ordinary elector to transfer who had removed his residence to another electorate.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER: A good many who voted at Ipswich voted also at that by-election on the Labour ticket.

Mr. THEODORE: I want briefly to go over what will be the result of what the Government propose in this Bill. It seems to me that, if the Bill is carried, the Government are making the residence qualification more difficult than ever, [9.30 p.m.] because they are requiring, in addition to the ordinary twelve months' residence in the State, two months' residence in the particular district, which will disfranchise for years certain residents of the State—men who are constantly travelling from one district to another, and who never have any settled residence for a great many months in any particular district. The hon. member for Eacham stated that it was not only conceivable, but very probable, that a large number of electors would be years in the State before they possessed the franchise. The Home Secretary laughs at that. He is so obsessed by his belief that this measure is as democratic as it can possibly be that he thinks that there is no validity in any argument used against it.

The PREMIER: The hon. member for Eacham was not long in the State—he was not here for four years.

Mr. THEODORE: The hon. member for Eacham was in the State long enough to get on the roll.

The HOME SECRETARY: He was not here four years.

The PREMIER: What the hon. member for Eacham can do, others can do.

Mr. THEODORE: It is not the fault of the Home Secretary that the hon. member for Eacham is not now in gaol.

The HOME SECRETARY: If he had been there it would have been his own fault.

Mr. BOWMAN: You did your best to get him there.

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Mr. THEODORE: The Home Secretary used a very powerful organisation—the Police Force—to try and hound down the hon. member for Eacham.

The HOME SECRETARY: Nonsense!

Mr. THEODORE: In connection with that matter, the Home Secretary was vindictive, spiteful, and narrow-minded.

The HOME SECRETARY: I never troubled my head about it at all, except to give instructions.

Mr. THEODORE: When a jury composed of fair-minded honest Britishers, although they had political opinions the same as those possessed by hon. members opposite, came to know the facts of the case, they, without any hesitation whatever, acquitted the hon. member for Eacham.

The HOME SECRETARY: That settled it.

Mr. BOWMAN: And you fell in.

Mr. THEODORE: The decision of the jury showed that the action of the Home Secretary in trying to hound down the hon. member for Eacham was quite unjustifiable.

The PREMIER: It shows that what you say, that it takes a man years to get on the roll, is not true.

Mr. THEODORE: It is possible, and highly probable, that, under certain circumstances, it will take men years to get on the roll.

The PREMIER: Your statements are ridiculous—just like a lot of statements that come from that side.

Mr. THEODORE: I will just quote this case: The workers in the sugar industry, and those engaged in the pastoral industry and the mining industry, for certain periods of the year go over the borders of the State.

The PREMIER: Are they domiciled in Queensland?

Mr. THEODORE: Yes, but their occupations lead them sometimes into New South Wales. They are bonâ fide residents of this State, but in following up shearing and other occupations they sometimes have to go into New South Wales for a month or two. Then when they come back to Queensland, because of the fact that they have not lived in Queensland continuously for the preceding twelve months, they will not be entitled to a vote.

The HOME SECRETARY: You are wrong.

Mr. THEODORE: Yes; they have to answer this question—

“Have you bonâ fide and continuously resided in Queensland for the last preceding twelve months?”

There are hundreds of such workers placed in that position. How is the hon. gentleman going to justify his action in attempting to disfranchise them? This Bill proposes to disfranchise the men engaged in that class of work. It proposes also to perpetuate the property franchise. That is thoroughly understood by the Premier. It proposes to set up a certain privileged class, and at the same time it proposes to continue to disfranchise all those people living in charitable institutions at the cost of the Government.

Mr. FORSYTH: New South Wales and Western Australia do the same.

Mr. THEODORE: The hon. gentleman said just now that there was no other Government in the Commonwealth that permitted persons receiving Government aid to

have a vote. I say that is not correct, because the Commonwealth permits them to have a vote.

Mr. FORSYTH: New South Wales and Western Australia say they cannot have a vote.

Mr. BOWMAN: The Commonwealth says that they can have a vote.

The HOME SECRETARY: We do not propose to slavishly follow the Commonwealth.

Mr. THEODORE: The Government disfranchises honest workers in this Bill. I am sure the hon. member will not say that the working classes generally are any danger to the State, and therefore he will disfranchise them. He will not say that, yet he is prepared to disfranchise a number of workers of Queensland all the same.

The PREMIER: If they are entitled, they may vote.

Mr. THEODORE: What about the nomadic shearers and miners and the sugar-workers? Perhaps they are not entitled to vote, according to the idea of the hon. gentleman.

The PREMIER: If they are registered for any electorate, they can vote.

Mr. THEODORE: The hon. gentleman is going to take good care that they cannot be registered. That is the proposal in the Bill.

The PREMIER: If they have the qualification, they will be registered.

Mr. THEODORE: What the hon. gentleman thinks is not that the working classes are a danger to the State, but that they are a danger to the Liberal party. That is the whole thing in a nutshell.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. THEODORE: This Bill was formed in its present state since the Federal elections.

The HOME SECRETARY: Nonsense!

Mr. THEODORE: It was formed because hon. members on that side have a fear of the result of the next general election. When the Labour party swept the polls at the recent Federal elections, the hon. gentleman, with the assistance of his right-hand man, devised—I may say concocted—these provisions to abolish the absentee vote.

The PREMIER: What was the date of the elections, and when was this Bill introduced?

Mr. THEODORE: Certain new provisions have been placed in this Bill since the Federal election. There was a Bill spoken of last year, but it contained provisions which are not in this Bill, and there are things in this Bill which were not in the Bill of last year. We can easily understand the frame of mind which possessed the hon. member since the last Federal elections. We can judge how it affected him by his speech on the Address in Reply, and the statements he made with regard to the Federal Government. We all know what the hon. gentleman said on that occasion. Since then an inquiry was ordered by the Hon. Joseph Cook to inquire into the result of the elections, particularly in Queensland and Western Australia. Some comment on that finding appeared in the "Brisbane Courier," of the 2nd of August, as follows:—

"As a result of the examination of the rolls used at the Federal election the Chief Electoral Officer was in a position to state to-day that out of forty-three divisions which had already been

accounted for only an average of three duplications per 1,000 votes had been traced, and it was not altogether certain that this small proportion represented an attempt at fraud. The forty-three divisions in question are made up as follows:—New South Wales eleven, Victoria sixteen, Queensland three, South Australia six, Western Australia three, Tasmania four. The total number of electors who voted in these divisions was 1,087,538.

"The official list of the apparent duplications in Queensland is: Darling Downs, eighty-three; Maranoa, twenty-nine; Wide Bay, eighty-one."

The HOME SECRETARY: That is the smallest portion of my allegations. (Opposition laughter.) What about the duplication of the Commonwealth rolls?

Mr. THEODORE: No one on this side said that the Commonwealth system was absolutely perfect. But even under that system there were less duplications than there were at the recent State election. There were less duplications relatively, and the number of duplications did not amount to any danger to the system, nor to any candidate contesting an election under that system.

Mr. FORSYTH: What did the investigation say about the number of people on the roll who should not be on the roll?

Hon. R. PHILIP: What did Knibbs say?

Mr. THEODORE: They did not report on that. The Home Secretary is very sore at the result of the inquiry, and we hear very little in the metropolitan papers nowadays about the allegations which the hon. member was voicing the other day. This inquiry was appointed by his friends in the Federal Government for the purpose of trying to bolster up the weak case of the hon. gentleman. It was the statements made by the hon. gentleman himself and those made by Mr. Hedges, of Western Australia, that were responsible for the holding of this inquiry. Mr. Hedges alleged that there were 2,000 duplicate votes recorded in the Fremantle election, but apparently it has been found out that there were only forty-three duplications.

The HOME SECRETARY: If the Federal rolls are correct, we are entitled to another representative.

Mr. THEODORE: If we do get another representative, the Labour party will win the seat. I am against this Bill for the reasons I have stated—that it abolishes the absent vote, which is the best and safest method of voting that we can devise; that it retains the property vote, which cannot be justified under any circumstances; that it renders more exclusive the residence vote, and disfranchises new arrivals from overseas entirely. The Bill also attempts to intimidate young voters—(Government laughter)—and to coerce and intimidate new arrivals by putting to them a series of inquisitorial questions when they claim to be enrolled.

The HOME SECRETARY: Very proper questions.

Mr. THEODORE: Questions are to be put to them when they claim to be enrolled, and those questions are of a nature which is calculated to intimidate young voters. (Government laughter.) The Minister knows very well that if a returning officer puts to new arrivals who have been in the State only

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fourteen months and are not conversant with the provisions of our electoral law a series of questions, and puts those questions in a severe tone, that will be calculated to frighten new arrivals. I hope that when the hon. the Premier speaks he will give us some explanation of the definition of the word "home." Why is the definition of the word "home." Why is the definition so framed that any nomadic worker and any casual worker temporarily resident in a district will not have a claim to vote? There is no doubt that the definition is of such a nature that it will prevent hundreds of workers in Queensland from exercising the franchise. The provision which defines the residence of an elector, and defines what a home shall be, if interpreted according to the ordinary meaning of words in the English language, will disfranchise hundreds of workers. The Bill says that a residence voter "must possess a home" within the electorate, that is to say, "a place of abode with a fixed purpose of remaining there, and not merely an abode for an occasional purpose either of business or of pleasure." There are numbers of sugar-workers who do not take up their abode in the district where they work with any fixed purpose of remaining there for the rest of their lives or for the remainder of the year, but they are none the less *bonâ fide* residents, and should be entitled to exercise the franchise. There are also thousands of railway workers in Queensland who reside in a district temporarily, but are none the less *bonâ fide* residents, and yet under this definition of the word "home" they will not be entitled to vote.

The HOME SECRETARY: They need not necessarily be in one particular spot in the electorate.

Mr. THEODORE: No; but a man claiming a vote for residence must be there with the fixed purpose of remaining there, and not merely making it a place of abode for an occasional purpose either of business or of pleasure. His residence there is for business purposes, and he may be there for three months, but he will be disfranchised under this definition of the term "home." If it is not intended to disfranchise such persons, then it is quite clear that the provision must be altered considerably. The only common sense interpretation of the provision as it now stands is that a casual worker temporarily resident in any place has not his home there. The Home Secretary proposes to introduce in this Bill an innovation in regard to the cancellation of polling-booths. It may be necessary to cancel a polling-booth where it is found that after a polling-booth has been appointed there are no electors at the place.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is not an innovation; it is simply legalising what is the practice, as it is doubtful whether it can be legally done under present legislation.

Mr. THEODORE: I accept the explanation that it is merely legalising the practice. The practice is what I take exception to. The provision in question evidently allows the Government to appoint polling-booths, and to cancel them at a date too late for the persons interested to make any effective protests, because they may be cancelled up to within three days of the election. Evidently that is the intention in introducing such a provision, for it is quite consistent with the general spirit of the proposal to make it difficult for people to record their votes. But, granted that there should be the right to cancel a polling-booth, I claim that that cancellation

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should be made not later than six days before the date of the election, or such other period as will admit of a protest being lodged against the cancellation.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has occupied the time allotted by the Standing Orders.

* The PREMIER (Hon. D. F. Denham, Oxley): I had hoped that the hon. member would really have discussed this measure from a non-party standpoint, but he has followed others in misconstruing the Bill. At the outset the hon. gentleman stated that we proposed in this Bill to disfranchise thousands of voters.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: How? The franchise is still an adult franchise, and every person, male and female, of the age of twenty-one years, who is entitled to vote, may be registered. Further, the franchise to-day is a residence franchise, and we do not propose to alter the condition of the franchise in that respect. We simply desire to ensure that those who are entitled to vote shall have full opportunity to vote, and that those who are not entitled to vote shall not be enrolled. The hon. member said this measure would disfranchise 13,000 persons who voted at the recent election. How are they going to be disfranchised? The hon. member stated that those voters recorded their votes though they were absent from their electorates. Well, the same thing can be done under this Bill.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No! How?

The PREMIER: Before I resume my seat I shall proceed to show how that can be accomplished, but in the meantime I propose to review some of the utterances we have listened to this afternoon. Since your occupancy of that chair, Mr. Speaker, I think you have never heard such a number of expressions that were so strangely inappropriate and misapplied to the subject under discussion as you have heard this afternoon. We have been told by hon. members opposite that democracy is imperilled. If democracy is imperilled, it is not by reason of anything done by members sitting on your right, but rather by reason of the action of those who are sitting on your left, and who are fast drifting towards oligarchy. The champions of liberty and democracy in Australia to-day are the Liberals. When you find men disqualifying capable workers merely to give preference to unionists, I say that democracy is imperilled, and that injustice has been advocated by the party which sits on your left, Mr. Speaker. One hon. gentleman said we are afraid of the people. That comes strangely from men sitting on your left. A few years ago this House said, "Let the people decide on the big question of public instruction." The people of Queensland were asked to say, "Do you wish that Scriptural lessons be given in State schools?" The people were asked that question, and they answered in the affirmative. We have men in this House who, after the people had said, "We wish religious instruction given," had the effrontery and the indecency to endeavour to block the people from getting their wish, and yet such hon. members say we are afraid of the people. Two or three weeks ago, when I moved an amendment that a certain question should be referred to the people, who then were afraid of the people?

Mr. HARDACRE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I wish to know if the hon. member is in order in discussing the religious referendum?

The PREMIER: I had finished with that question. It has been repeatedly stated this afternoon that democracy was imperilled, that we are afraid to trust the people, and I say that such is not the case. What we seek in this amending Bill is to make it possible that the people can more freely, more fully, and more readily exercise the franchise. Then we are told in grandiloquent terms that we should take a header into the rising tide of democracy. Why, we are in the swim of democracy all the time. It is the gentlemen on the other side who are out of that swim, and who have got into another current which will lead them, and the people too, if they are foolish enough to follow them, to destruction and ruin. How is this Bill in any sense reactionary? Are we seeking to deprive adults of the franchise? Are we seeking to lessen the opportunity of attending the polls? The franchise has not been touched, but we have made it more possible for the franchise to be used. We are told we are the traditional enemy of the women's vote. I was a member of the Administration that passed the Bill conferring the vote on women. We are told we are going to deprive women of the secrecy of the ballot, but just how it is going to be done has not been made clear. But this is on a parity with remarks of the deputy leader of the Opposition, who drew a picture of the person arriving at twenty-one, or the new-comer who had become entitled to a vote, who sought to be enfranchised. He drew a picture of how these persons were going to be terrorised by such simple questions as "What is your age?" "Where were you born?" "By what ship did you come?" It is all sheer nonsense. Equally nonsensical is the idea that women would be terrorised by the postal ballot.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What about giving their age?

The PREMIER: I think any ordinary woman of intelligence would not object to tell her age. In these days, when woman is entering into competition with us in all spheres of life, there is no reason why she should not tell her age. And it is sheer nonsense to think that the women of to-day will hesitate at all to be put on the same plane with men in having to tell their age and where they were born. Our hon. friends on the other side fail to see that the amendments proposed in this Bill will not merely ensure a clean and qualified roll of electors, but will make the exercise of the franchise possible to many who in days past have been unable to exercise it. Hundreds of the most desirable citizens of the State have been prevented in recent elections from recording their votes. The hon. member for Burrum or for Wide Bay, I am not sure which, put his finger on the right spot this afternoon when he reminded us that new settlers have often not the conveniences to convey their wives 10 or 15 miles to a polling-booth. The man may have a horse on which he can ride to the booth, but the woman has to remain at home. The leader of the Opposition last Thursday week said something to the effect that we had set about narrowing the franchise and lessening the numbers on the roll—

Mr. RYAN: That is correct.

The PREMIER: And he built up that argument, as I took it, upon two grounds—first, that we restored the postal vote, and next, that we abolished the absentee vote. I will allow that the hon. member is a special pleader, and that he pleaded his cause with consummate ability. I could not help thinking that, had he held a brief for this side, how much superior a case he could have presented. His argument was a plea for the nomadic population, to use his own expression, and I could not help noticing, underlying the whole train of his ideas, a contemptuous disregard of the settlers in the rural districts. That nomadic population, if it qualifies by residence in any electorate, will not be deprived of the vote.

Mr. HUXHAM: What about the Dunwich vote?

The PREMIER: They are not entitled to the franchise. There are two Labour Administrations in the Commonwealth—in New South Wales and Western Australia—and they have been long enough in power to secure the vote for the inmates of benevolent institutions, but they have had enough sense not to give it. I do not propose, at any rate, that such an amendment will be introduced, if any vote of mine can keep it out. There was a contemptuous disregard, in the speech of the leader of the Opposition, for the new settlers in the rural districts, and a glorification of the man whose roof is his hat and who constantly moves on. There was a contempt for the man whose hut is his castle, for the men and women who are settling and striving their best to make good in this country. Under this Bill every facility will be given to the men who are entitled to get their names on the roll, and every facility will be given for a clean and accurate roll. I would like to ask the hon. gentleman whether qualification and accuracy are synonymous with narrowing the rights and lessening the numbers—expressions which he used often.

Mr. RYAN: They are synonymous in this Bill.

The PREMIER: I will just recall some of the actions of recent years. During the regrettable strike in the early part of last year, there were certain members of Parliament—one of whom is not with us to-day, but who is in the service of the [10 p.m.] Commonwealth—who were present in the street getting applications for enrolment signed, utterly regardless of how long they had been here. They had just come into town or had just landed, and they were told to put their names down for whatever domicile they were then holding, and it was found again and again, upon investigation, that there were scores of men occupying dwellings where but a few men could reside.

The HOME SECRETARY: Quite correct.

The PREMIER: Then, we know quite well that there have been enrolments made long before the persons are entitled to enrol.

Mr. THEODORE: If you knew that, why did you not prosecute?

The PREMIER: I am not so fond of going to the police court as the hon. member may imagine. A more important aspect is the difficulty of getting to the poll on the part of electors in the widely scattered districts. How came I to realise the force of this? Why, Sir, it was in the Dalby electorate two years ago. There I found people

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had from 15 to 18 miles to travel, and it was impossible for all the members of the family to go to the polling-booth. For these reasons, we have introduced the postal vote, safeguarded at every standpoint. We have gained experience of the use of the postal vote; we have seen its failings and its vulnerable points, and these have been safeguarded and protected. The hon. member put his finger upon a point—and with all honesty of purpose this Bill is not a party Bill. Matters affecting the qualifications of electors are for the House, and the hon. member indicated a phase of the question to which I have applied myself since, and I quite see the injustice that will prevail if the Bill were unamended. We see our way quite easily to amend it. The hon. member asked why we did not go in for compulsory enrolment. Well, that matter had consideration. The natural corollary of compulsory enrolment is compulsory voting.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Not necessarily.

The PREMIER: I say it is a fair corollary. With compulsion to enrol, there should be compulsory voting, and the only way of compelling the vote would be to give what I should be very unwilling to give, and that is absolutely unrestricted opportunity to vote by means of the post. That would be undesirable, and, unless we give that, we cannot have compulsory voting, because if you are going to compel a man to vote, he would claim travelling facilities for recording his vote, and inasmuch as the compulsion of compulsory enrolment cannot be assured, that has not been embodied in the Bill. But we give every facility, and are prepared to enlarge the facilities, to ensure convenience to get on the roll, and, above all, we give every opportunity to record the vote. Now, the hon. member made a great point that persons have to remain in the State twelve months before they can get a vote, whilst in the Commonwealth the qualification is six months. That point was admirably answered by the hon. member for Burrum, because a newchum—one just arrived from the old land—is not in a position to understand the situation adequately to cast an intelligent vote after six months' residence.

Mr. FOLEY: He is an alien.

The PREMIER: By no means an alien, because, if he were an alien, he could not get a vote at all.

Mr. FOLEY: He is an alien; that is how you regard him.

The PREMIER: We are dealing with problems with which he is not familiar, and which he has not had sufficient time to diagnose for himself, and I think it is not a fair thing that men who do not understand the situation should be entrusted with the power of the vote until they have had time during which they may learn something of the affairs of the State. After all, is the franchise something to be valued? If it is something to be valued, then, surely, it is worth waiting twelve months for.

Mr. ADAMSON: There is only a three-months' residence qualification in New South Wales.

The PREMIER: I am not disposed to follow New South Wales. In the estimation of the Government, and the people

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generally, it is considered a fair thing that people should remain in this State twelve months before they get power to cast a vote.

Mr. RYAN: That is the way you encourage immigrants.

The PREMIER: The hon. member and his party do not wish to see immigrants coming here.

Mr. RYAN: Yes, we do.

The HOME SECRETARY: A short time ago they referred to the immigrants as the "scum of Europe."

The PREMIER: They are constantly raising objections against immigrants officially, and yet in other directions, apparently, they are advocating immigration. However, the men who get a vote after being twelve months here probably have not enjoyed that privilege at home, and they are quite willing to wait the twelve months. The secret of it is this: that on arrival they are generally taken in hand by some emissary from the Trades Hall, and there is poured into them misrepresentation, so that if, after six months, they can exercise the franchise, it would probably be exercised in the Labour interest; but in twelve months the immigrants get a little sense, and they realise that if they want to be on the side of freedom and liberty they must vote with us. The hon. member raised a point the other night that a person who had lived in Queensland, and who had gone hence and returned, would have to be here during the last preceding twelve months before once more getting on the roll. There is no doubt that that is the Bill as brought to this House, but it will be amended in Committee, because it would be an unreasonable thing that persons living twelve months in a State, who had gone hence and then returned to Queensland, should have to be here twelve months before getting on the roll again. They will merely have to remain here the same period that would elapse if they passed from Brisbane to Enoggera, or from one electorate to another—that is, two months. That is the matter raised by the leader of the Opposition, and he is correct in his contention. It is so in the draft Bill. The draftsman thought it was covered by an expression in regard to residence, but it is better there should be no doubt upon the point at all. I understand that the definition of residence is put in, not from any sinister motive, as has been stated again and again—one would think that we were the personification of the Evil One from the sinister motives attributed to us—but that definition was put in there to avoid litigation and trouble when it comes to the tribunal.

Mr. THEODORE: There is no doubt it wants recasting.

The PREMIER: Oh, does it? Well, that can be adjusted. The hon. the leader of the Opposition appeared to be distressed about certain individuals who would not be long enough in one place to qualify as voters. Well, if these men have a domicile for which they have been duly enrolled, they can utilise the postal vote to record their votes for their own electorates; but to say that 200 or 300 or 400 men who are working on a railway line in any one given electorate should be able to swamp that electorate with their votes is a monstrous proposition.

Mr. ADAMSON: Why should they be disfranchised?

The PREMIER: It is a pure accident that they are in that electorate. They are not disfranchised.

Mr. KIRWAN: If they are single men, they are.

The PREMIER: I suppose they have some domicile. If they have not, then they are not entitled to the franchise. Domicile is the essence of the Bill; but if they are entitled to be on the roll, they will be able to exercise the franchise. Hon. members have been advocating the claims of people who are not entitled to vote. Do they want an impure roll of that nature? It appears that they want one special class for themselves—a nomadic vote that can be dropped into one electorate and swamp it at any time. Such persons have no interest in the electorate. It is a pure accident that they are there. They merely pass on, and therefore it is not right that such men should have the power to swamp an electorate.

Mr. THEODORE: Power to upset the settled policy of the Government.

Mr. RYAN: It would be too dreadful.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Can you show how they can record their votes?

The PREMIER: I shall before I resume my seat, but they must be qualified. A great deal was made about the questions—the date of birth, the place of birth. Now, I am not sure that an education test would not be a good thing to qualify for a vote. It might have been said that we were reactionary if we had incorporated it in the Bill, but surely if a person is ignorant of his age or of his place of birth or of the year of arrival, or by what means he arrived, he might reasonably be disqualified. Hon. members know perfectly well why those questions are asked. They are not to block men from getting votes.

Mr. THEODORE: To intimidate?

The PREMIER: I do not find men so easily intimidated. No; the average man who arrives in this State, after he has been here twelve months, knows perfectly well that it is a free country, and intimidation is absolutely impossible unless it lies with the men who have been preaching all this stuff.

The HOME SECRETARY: They are high priests.

The PREMIER: I say these questions are necessary, so that we may know the people are bona fide entitled to vote. A clean roll, every hon. member will admit, is a desirable thing.

Mr. HUXHAM: How can you ask a single girl where her wife and family reside?

The PREMIER: Nothing so immoral as that obtains.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Acts Shortening Act provides for that.

The PREMIER: Hon. members have been much horrified about this property qualification. I wonder that some inquiring minds have not asked to have a return of all the property votes that have been transferred. It would be very interesting, and I would very much like to see it myself. But I think it is quite a fair thing. Suppose I lived for twenty-five years of my life, working hard, in Maranoa, and towards the end of my life I find I can take it easier and I go down to Sandgate and rusticate there. I have no interests there, but I have in

Maranoa, where I lived for about twenty-five years. Is it not perfectly reasonable that I should be allowed to vote for the district in which my interests lie? The man who exercises the property vote has a fixed and settled entity, and he can only be once transferred, or I should say he should be only once transferred, and I shall be quite willing to see an amendment in that direction. But surely a man who has lived in the State for twenty-five or thirty years and has helped to build it up and has borne the heat and burden of the day should be entitled to transfer to the electorate from which he came! I wish hon. members opposite had concern for men of that type as they have for the mere nomadic type, as the leader of the Opposition said.

Mr. RYAN: I did not speak of the mere nomadic population.

The PREMIER: I will leave out the "mere;" I will call it "nomadic."

Mr. THEODORE: Do you not think it is possible for them to vote where they are resident?

The PREMIER: They can only have one vote. I am quite willing that the postal provisions be adequately safeguarded, but, as compared with the absent vote, the postal vote is incomparably ahead of it. The postal vote secures a greater accuracy than has been obtained through the absent vote. The postal vote enables a fuller check to be made of the qualifications of the elector to record it than does the absent vote. The postal vote can be made available to hundreds of persons who cannot attend a polling-booth. Those hon. members who have been pleading for the nomadic population have not cared a snap of the fingers for the real settled people in the country who are here to dwell with us, and yet there are many, many hundreds of these who have not been able to vote, either because they have not the means of conveyance, or because the husband may go, but the wife has to remain behind and look after the family. Then the postal vote would be available to other classes to whom the absent vote would not. It will be possible for men at sea to use it who could not go to the poll, and who could not use the absent vote. Under this Bill they can go after nomination day and secure a certificate to record their votes. That is why I say the postal vote is superior. And not only is it available for men at sea, but it is possible for the man travelling in New South Wales to use it also. Under the absent vote provisions that vote would be lost. Under the provisions of the postal vote a certificate can be secured before he goes away out of the State, and his vote can be recorded. Then, again, it is perfectly simple to operate, and, what is of very great importance, it obviates delay at the polling-booth. Let me recall my experience at Rockhampton at the last Federal election. There was good provision made for the recording of absent votes, but, in spite of a long table at which there were several obliging officers, quick and expeditious, people were kept there for a very long time. It was only because I happened to be known that I was given a quick despatch.

Mr. FOLEY: They were taking the declaration of every voter.

The PREMIER: Exactly; that was the reason of the delay, and therefore I say the postal vote is vastly superior, because there

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is no delay or blocking of the polling-booth on election day. All this can be done before polling-day, and therefore it is distinctly superior. This party has no wish to block bonâ fide voting. We want to put facilities in the way of the bonâ fide voter. I can see the force of the argument raised by the leader of the Opposition with regard to the 50-mile limit, and that can be amended.

Mr. RYAN: How far?

The PREMIER: We will make it 5 miles. Then I recognise what has been said about the provision which says that the vote must be recorded within the boundary of the electoral division. Clearly enough, it would be an unfair thing if a person in the Warrego electorate who had a vote in Brisbane were disfranchised because he happened to be away from home. He can make his application to the returning officer of the electorate for which he is enrolled, and thus he will be able to secure his vote. We are ready to meet all reasonable difficulties that present themselves. I say again that electoral law belongs not to one side of the House or the other. We are adhering to the principle, which is recognised throughout Australasia, of the adult vote, and the object of this Bill is to secure freedom in the use of the franchise, and see that every opportunity shall be allowed to duly qualified persons to be enrolled, and, being enrolled, to exercise their vote. The Bill is conceived in this spirit, and if in Committee we can more fully achieve the object we have in view, we shall be only too ready to achieve that object. I want to remove the impression that there is any sinister motive whatever in the Bill. This is a question of the franchise of the people. But we do say that only those who are entitled to vote shall be entitled to be on the roll, and, being there, we will give them facilities through the post, under certain conditions, to record their vote; and, from our experience, we know there are many good and true citizens who hitherto have not been able to vote who, will by this means be able to record their votes. I contend that this Bill is entirely in the interests of true, clean, electoral law, and a full and free exercise of that which we so much rejoice in—the adult franchise.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HARDACRE (*Leichhardt*): I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday next.

Mr. RYAN: I understand from the motion of the Premier that it is the intention that there shall be no business to-morrow and the following day. It has not been usual for the House to adjourn for Exhibition week, and I should like to have some intimation given to the House on that point. I have seen in certain sections of the Press that the Government do not intend to go beyond a certain date this session, and any business not then cleared up will have to stand over. I quite agree that that is a proper principle to adopt in conducting the session, but I would like to have some indication as to whether the House

will sit more than three days a week during the balance of the session, and also whether there will be an intimation from the Government as to the date of the closing of the session. I think this is the proper time to get that information.

The PREMIER: I am most happy to give the hon. gentleman as much information as I possibly can. There has been no intimation, as far as I am concerned, that the House will not sit beyond a given date. Usually the session lasts about five months, and, if that be so this year, the end will come about the middle of November. I remember last session too vividly to again ask hon. members to sit for four or five days a week. It is not good for members, and not good for business. As far as I can see, we shall have no occasion to ask hon. members to sit more than three days for some considerable time. Towards the end of the session we may have to speed up to four days. Last year we adjourned on Wednesday and Thursday in Exhibition week, and I understand from the "Whips" that it was the common desire of members, as they had a good many of their constituents down, to be free for the two days; but, personally, I shall be willing to get on with business. I shall be only too glad, when business has been further shaped, to advise the House as to what we hope to do by a certain date.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-nine minutes past 10 o'clock.

[*Hon. D. F. Denham.*