

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 1944

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Brassington, Fortitude Valley) took the chair at 11 a.m.

QUESTIONS.**QUEENSLAND DAIRYMEN'S ORGANISATION.**

Mr. BRAND (Isis), for Mr. WALKER (Cooroora), asked the Attorney-General—

"1. Has he received the proposed constitution of the Queensland Dairymen's Organisation?"

"2. Has it yet been dealt with and, if so, what decision has been reached?"

Hon. D. A. GLEDSON (Ipswich) replied—

"1 and 2. No."

EFFECT OF COMMONWEALTH POWERS ACT.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) asked the Premier—

"Will he secure competent legal opinion and table it for the information of hon. members on the following aspects of the Commonwealth Powers Act of 1943, viz.:—

1. What laws of the Commonwealth are affected by the referred powers so as to make them inconsistent in any respect with corresponding laws of the State?"

2. Would the basic wage declared under Commonwealth law now prevail as against the State basic wage in case of dispute?"

3. In case of inconsistency as between an industrial award or agreement under Commonwealth and State law, respectively, which award or agreement would prevail?"

Hon. F. A. COOPER (Bremer) replied—

"1 to 3. It is not the practice to answer questions involving expressions of opinion."

PEACE USES OF MUNITION FACTORIES.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"1. In view of the possible early disposal by the Commonwealth Government of munition factories and large quantities of machinery and equipment, will he have full inquiries made at an early date as to what is likely to be available which could be used for the purpose of the co-operative manufacture of machinery and other requirements of primary industries?"

"2. Will he have the information so obtained collated in handy form so that copies of it may be made available to persons and bodies interested in the formation of a primary producers' co-operative association, having amongst its objects the manufacture and distribution of machinery, implements, and other equipment used in the various branches of primary industry in this State?"

"3. Will he give consideration to the making of any necessary amendments in existing legislation to enable statutory bodies handling the business of primary producers to subscribe capital to a co-operative association as indicated in question No. 2?"

Hon. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) replied—

"1 and 2. Close touch has been and will continue to be kept with any developments in the diversion of machinery and equipment from munition factories for the requirements of primary industries, and suitable action will be taken to meet the situation.

"3. Yes."

FISH CAUGHT AT METROPOLITAN SEASIDE RESORTS.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) asked the Secretary for Labour and Employment—

"1. Has the Fish Board reached a decision, or is giving consideration to a proposal to direct that a specified proportion of fish caught at seaside resorts within the Metropolitan Fish Supply District shall be forwarded to the Metropolitan Fish Market?"

"2. If so, what are the details of such decision or proposal?"

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

"1 and 2. I would refer the hon. member to Sections 26 and 27 of the Fish Supply Management Acts, 1935 to 1941."

IRON FOR WATER TROUGHES.

Mr. CHANDLER (Hamilton) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"As it has been reported to me that there is a serious shortage of the necessary iron for making tanks and troughing used for watering cattle or other stock, and that as a result (a) cattle have to be driven long distances to water and consequently do not fatten; (b) graziers are unable to fully stock on account of lack of facilities for watering; (c) dairy farmers in some instances are unable to continue milking their herds because of water shortage; (d) losses of stock through lack of the necessary water facilities have already occurred and more serious losses are threatened, and as this must have a serious effect on the meat and butter supply, will he make urgent representations to the Federal Government for the release in Queensland of a larger quantity of suitable iron?"

Hon. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) replied—

"Representations have been frequently and consistently made to the Commonwealth authorities for the release of larger quantities of galvanised iron for making tanks and troughing required for watering cattle and other live stock, and

I was recently advised by the Materials Supply Directorate of the Ministry of Munitions that the quantity of galvanised iron allotted to Queensland during the past three months has been increased to the full extent which present-day production will permit."

REPORT OF ROYAL COMMISSION ON FRUIT AND VEGETABLES.

Mr. BRAND (Isis), for **Mr. MAHER** (West Moreton), asked the Premier—

"Has the final report by the Royal Commission on Fruit and Vegetable Marketing yet been received? If so, when will copies become available to the public at the Government Printing Office?"

Hon. F. A. COOPER (Bremer) replied—

"Yes. The report is now in the printer's hands, and will be made available in due course."

BARALABA COAL MEASURES.

Mr. BRAND (Isis), for **Mr. MAHER** (West Moreton), asked the Secretary for Mines—

"As recent geological reports indicate a great wealth of workable coal in the Baralaba measures, is any energetic and intensified effort being made to heavily step-up production on this field to meet urgent Queensland war-time coal requirements?"

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

"Mount Morgan Limited has indicated that it proposes stepping-up production appreciably in the coal areas held by the company at Baralaba, on which geological reports were recently issued."

WAGES AND SUBSIDIES OF COAL-MINING INDUSTRY.

Mr. PIE (Windsor) asked the Secretary for Mines—

"1. Is the Wage-pegging Order being strictly observed in the coal-mining industry in Queensland and throughout Australia?"

"2. Is a stable price for coal being maintained in Queensland and throughout Australia?"

"3. Is direct subsidy, or freight concessions, being paid and granted by the Commonwealth Government to certain mines in Queensland or in Australia?"

"4. Has a fund been established by the Coal Commissioner and the Price Fixing Commissioner to be operated jointly by them to provide relief to a large number of small mines which could not continue production at the prevailing price and the prevailing or a rising level of costs?"

"5. Is any subsidy being paid by the Commonwealth Government to any mines in Queensland or in Australia?"

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

"1 to 5. The matters referred to by the hon. member for Windsor do not come within the scope of the Department of Mines, and I would suggest that he direct his questions to the appropriate Federal Minister."

STABILISATION OF PRICES OF GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS.

Mr. PIE (Windsor) asked the Premier—

"Did he, at the recent Premiers' Conference, discuss with the Commonwealth Authorities the subject of price stabilisation in relation to the activities and purchases of State Governments and State institutions? If so, will he lay on the table of this House a report on such discussions?"

Hon. F. A. COOPER (Bremer) replied—

"No. The treatment of State Government Departments under the Price Stabilisation Plan was deferred for consideration at the next Premiers' Conference to be held shortly."

SPEED OF TRAINS, HUGHENDEN-WINTON.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Transport—

"Will he lay on the table, for the perusal of hon. members, the departmental file in connection with the Commissioner for Railways' recent decision to increase the speed of trains on the Hughenden-Winton section from 25 to 30 miles per hour?"

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Mirani) replied—

"The decision to increase the speed of trains on the Hughenden-Winton section from 25 to 30 miles per hour followed on an inspection made recently by the Commissioner for Railways, the Chief Engineer for Railways, and the Maintenance Engineer for the Northern Division. For the information of the hon. member, it is not customary to lay departmental files on the table of the House."

CLASSIFICATION OF STATION-MASTERS AND NIGHT OFFICERS.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Transport—

"1. Is he aware that the Commissioner for Railways, without reference to the unions concerned and without application to the Industrial Court for variation of the relevant clauses and schedules of the Railways Award, created an entirely new classification in the station-masters and night officers' grade which is to be known as staff officer, and that these men will perform the same duties as are now being performed by night officers at a salary of £10 per year less?"

"2. Is it the policy of his department that the employees only are compelled to make application to the court for any

variation of the award, while the Commissioner is exempt?

"3. Is this arbitrary reduction of status and pay to be considered as the Government's tangible implementation of the verbal praise they lavished on railwaymen during the recent election campaign?

"4. Is this merely the forerunner of similar arbitrary reductions for other grades of the service?

"5. Is this action indicative of what the railwaymen can expect in the Government's post-war policy as a reward for the splendid service they have rendered and are still rendering to this country, and for which they have been commended by all sections of the community?"

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Mirani) replied—

"1. to 5. Under section 17 of the Railways Acts, the Commissioner has power to appoint such officers, clerks, and other employees as he thinks necessary. The position of staff officer was created for the purpose of enabling the department to adequately staff a number of train crossing stations to facilitate Army movements. Normally, a number of these stations would be unattended. Unlike night officers, staff officers will not require to be qualified in telegraphy, and their services will be utilised at stations where a knowledge of telegraphy is not necessary. Upon qualifying in telegraphy, they will be eligible for appointment to the position of night officer. The creation of this position does not involve a reduction in status for classified night officers, as no classified night officer will be reduced to the position of staff officer unless he specially applies for a staff officer vacancy. Employees now acting as night officer will, however, be regarded as acting staff officers if at staff officer stations or if not fully qualified as night officers. The position of staff officer is a new one, for which employees not qualified for appointment as night officers will be eligible. The matter has been fully discussed by the Commissioner with representatives of the combined railway unions."

TOWNSVILLE BRANCH, MEDICAL AID TO RUSSIA COMMITTEE.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked The Premier—

"In view of the fact that his department has made grants to all patriotic bodies in Townsville, including the Salvation Army Red Shield and the Missions to Seamen, from the proceeds of Sunday night picture entertainments, and further in view of the fact that the Townsville and District Patriotic Fund have advised that it is not competent for it to share any of its receipts from this source with any other organisation, would he allocate a portion of the proceeds of such entertainments to the Townsville Branch of the Medical Aid to Russia Committee, which was registered as a patriotic body by this Government?"

Hon. F. A. COOPER (Bremer) replied—

"Allocations have not been made to all patriotic bodies, as stated. A uniform practice has been established of allocating available funds from the sources mentioned amongst the three principal patriotic funds, viz., the Australian Red Cross Society, the Australian Comforts Fund, and the Patriotic Fund, in each centre from which the moneys have been received. The matter raised by the hon. member has already received my consideration, but I feel that it is impracticable to make an equitable distribution to the many varied patriotic funds which are functioning in the respective centres. I have already informed the Townsville branch of the Medical Aid to Russia Committee that it is competent for the Townsville and District Patriotic Fund to make a donation to the committee from the moneys allocated by me to such patriotic fund."

STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITIES.

Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) asked The Secretary for Public Instruction—

"1. How many students were there in attendance—(a) at the University of Queensland; (b) at all the universities in Australia; in each of the years 1937, 1938, and 1939?"

"2. How many persons were there—(a) in Queensland for every university student in attendance at the Queensland University; (b) in Australia for every university student in attendance at universities in Australia—in each of the years 1937, 1938, and 1939?"

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) replied—

"1 and 2. The information is in course of preparation, and will be supplied when completed."

PAPER.

The following paper was laid on the table—
By-law No. 444 under the Railways Acts, 1914 to 1934."

ELECTIONS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Mann, Brisbane, in the chair.)

Hon. D. A. GLEDSON (Ipswich—Attorney-General) (11.18 a.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Elections Acts, 1915 to 1943, in certain particulars."

From time to time the Government have endeavoured to amend the Elections Acts to enable elections to be conducted in an absolutely fair and impartial manner. Recently statements were made through the Press and in this Chamber in connection with the conduct of the last election, and I

desire to inform every hon. member and the public of Queensland that no charge has been made by either the hon. member for Windsor, any other hon. member of Parliament, or anyone else to either me or the Premier about the conduct of the last election or about any action taken by any member of the public or any other person during the last election.

Under the Elections Act provision is made for dealing with malpractices at an election. Provision is also made for the setting up of an Elections Tribunal. It is to be remembered that this is all done not by the Attorney-General or the Premier or the Government but by this Parliament. This Parliament is responsible for the law under which elections are conducted. If there are any breaches of that law it is the responsibility of members of Parliament or of any person who detects the breach to bring it before the notice of the authorities immediately so that appropriate action may be taken. Has that been done here? No, it has not. All we have had has been a whingeing gurgling sort of bellyache from the hon. member for Windsor about the conduct of the election.

The Elections Act provides that a judge of the Supreme Court shall constitute the Elections Tribunal. It also provides that that tribunal shall be a court of record, that it shall have power to inquire into and determine elections questions and questions that may be referred to it by the Assembly and that it shall deal with matters concerning the qualification or disqualification of any member returned to the Assembly. It goes further and says that any matter in connection with the elections can be dealt with by the tribunal. It also provides that a complaint shall be lodged within eight weeks of the election. It also deals with undue election returns because some person has voted who has no right to vote. Any person claiming to have a right to be elected or returned at an election or any person alleging himself to have been a candidate at such election may petition the tribunal. The petition shall be signed by the petitioner or petitioners, if more than one; the Act provides that one petitioner can petition the tribunal. If the hon. member for Windsor knew of anything that was wrong he had the right to petition the Elections Tribunal within eight weeks of the election, but what do we see? The usual tactics adopted by this type of person are indulged in here. The time within which a person may petition the tribunal is allowed to expire, deliberately, and these persons simply make certain general statements in the Press or in this Chamber.

He has not even yet told us of one man who has voted irregularly. He has not given us the name of any man or woman who has personated anybody else, nor has he given us the name of any man or woman who has used his or her vote more than once. In this connection we have reports from returning officers, which is in accordance with the Elections Act it is proposed to amend. The Act provides that every returning officer shall submit a report of all those people who have apparently

voted twice, and I have the report with respect to every electorate. Every returning officer is required to set out his reasons for the apparent double voting or the apparent voting twice. I might add that these reports are submitted to each of the political candidates so that if there is anything amiss it can be dealt with immediately. Not one hon. member who was returned at the elections and not one defeated candidate has made a single complaint either to the department or to the tribunal. Selecting a report from the file at random, I draw out that relating to the Albert electorate. I find that there are eight names of persons who apparently voted twice.

Mr. Macdonald: All Labour voters?

Mr. GLEDSON: I am not able to say for whom they voted, nor have I any means of finding out. I only know that they were voters in the electorate, and I cannot say whether they were Labour, Country Party, Q.P.P., or Independent voters. We do not inquire into that, nor can we do so, because it is a secret vote and we have no means of discovering how a person votes because the ballot papers and the rolls are not controlled by the Department of Justice. They are not received by us. Those matters are controlled by this Parliament, and it is this Parliament that has the rolls and the votes in its custody. All the ballot papers, all the returns, and all the rolls used by the returning officers are sealed by the returning officers and sent to the Clerk of the Parliament, who keeps them under his control. The Department of Justice has no opportunity of knowing how people voted, or whether they voted for the Labour candidate or any other person. Taking the Albert electorate, and inquiring why eight persons apparently voted twice, I get this information—(1) Probable error by P.O. in marking; (2) Error due probably to similarity of names; (3) Probably an error due to mistaken identity; (4) Probable error in marking by P.O. at Numinbah; (5) Probable error in marking by P.O. at Currumbin; (6) Probably an error due to mistaken identity; (7) Probable error in marking by P.O. at Burleigh Heads; (8) Probably an error due to mistaken identity.

Mr. L. J. Barnes: Who has to launch the prosecution, the individual member or the Government?

Mr. GLEDSON: The individual member brings the matter before the department, and if a prosecution is justified it is launched by the police. The hon. member must know that it is a criminal offence to do certain things contrary to the Elections Act.

Mr. Luckins: For which a person may be liable to two years' imprisonment.

Mr. GLEDSON: I am not going to say what term a person is liable to, but if he personates someone else or votes incorrectly, a prosecution may be launched against him by the Police Department charging him with the commission of a criminal offence. Of course, the police cannot prosecute if they know nothing about the commission of the offence.

We now proceed to the second report I am about to read, that in connection with the Baroona election. The report of the returning officer for the Baroona electorate discloses that five electors apparently voted twice. All these were checked over by the returning officer. I will deal with them in detail:—

No. 1103, error in marking by the presiding officer; No. 1735, wrongly marked; No. 3092, probable error in marking; No. 4357, error in marking; No. 7356, probable error in marking.

We could go right through the whole of the reports of the returning officers but we will come down to the Windsor electorate. The report of the returning officer reads—

“I have the honour to inform you that I have examined the rolls which have been used and marked at the several polling places within the electoral district of Windsor at the election held on the 15th day of April, 1944. I have ascertained whether any electors appeared to have voted at more than one polling place, and the following list shows the names and numbers of all electors who appeared to have so voted at more than one polling place.”

The number here is nil.

I am not going to weary the Committee except to mention that the same thing applies to the whole of the reports from the returning officers as to apparent double voting. There are only a few, some more and some less, in each electorate.

I should like to stress again that each candidate gets a copy of that list and he has the opportunity of appealing to the Elections Tribunal with regard to anything that appears to him to be wrong in the conduct of the election or of informing the Department of Justice or the Police Department, when if investigation warrants it a criminal prosecution will be taken against any person who is thought to have committed a breach of the law.

Mr. Macdonald: What happens if the candidate is not informed?

Mr. Hanson: He makes his own investigation.

Mr. GLEDSON: If he is not notified by the returning officer and the department is informed to that effect we will see that he is and find out why the returning officer has not carried out his instructions. We have been told, of course, that the returning officers have not done their duty. We have a statement in the public Press, “Pie’s 9 Poll Charges.” I am not making the statement; this is a Press statement. I should not think of addressing the hon. member for Windsor as Pie. We have often heard of four and twenty blackbirds who were baked in a pie but in this particular Press statement when the pie was opened there were only nine—only nine specific charges were made by the hon. member for Windsor in the Press statement, but not one of those charges has come to the department or the Premier. If any hon. member does not like sending a

charge to me he can send it to the Premier, who will receive any charge that may be made. No charge was made to either of us, yet these statements have been made five months after the election, when of course the hon. member cannot make a charge before the tribunal.

So far as the conduct of the recent general election, and the behaviour of the officers of the Department of Justice, are concerned I am prepared to stand up in this Committee or in any other place and say that not one finger can be raised against them.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLEDSON: Not one charge can be made of any corruption against either the Under Secretary of the Department of Justice, who has control of the elections, or the Chief Electoral Officer, who does the work in these matters. I do not take any credit for the running of the election; that is done by the officers of my department. I can say, though, that never before in the history of the world have such officers had to provide for the whole of the fighting services whether they were enrolled or not. The difficulty in that connection has been met by the Queensland Government, who provided that every person serving in the forces had an opportunity of recording his or her vote at the general elections. I say without fear of contradiction that the officers in control of the election did their job in this connection splendidly.

I have evidence to prove it. I have here an extract from the “Telegraph” of Saturday, 15 April, which was election day. This was apparently printed after the poll closed. It says—

“Polling opened at the City Hall with a few dozen voters who had been waiting for the doors to open. The arrangements made by the Under-Secretary of the Justice Department (Mr. J. D. O’Hagan), who is the officer responsible for the conduct of the elections, were, on the whole, excellent, and polling proceeded smoothly throughout the day. As the morning wore on it was apparent that extra assistance was needed to deal with the votes of unenrolled members of the services and the Merchant Navy, who came along in large numbers to the City Hall.

“The only other sections of the polling booth where there was delay were those handling absent votes for country electorates and the information counter.”

That is a statement by the “Telegraph,” and we are proposing to get leave to amend the Bill to deal with those weaknesses. It was pointed out by the “Telegraph” at that time—

Mr. Muller: When are you going to say something about the Bill?

Mr. GLEDSON: I am talking about the Bill all the time. If the hon. member for Fassifern wants to stop me from saying these things there is a way to do it under the Standing Orders, if he can get sufficient

members of the Committee to agree with him. (Laughter.)

The item in the "Telegraph" continues—

"To about 1 p.m. there was always a long queue at the absent voting place for Northern and Central district electors, and a smaller queue for the Cairns and adjacent areas. This indicated the extent to which people have moved to the metropolitan area for temporary periods.

"During the morning the Premier (Mr. Cooper), the Minister for Health and Home Affairs (Mr. Hanlon), the Attorney-General (Mr. Gledson), who administers the Elections Act, and the Minister for Mines (Mr. Gair) visited the central polling booth."

We find not only the "Telegraph" giving credit to the officers of this department. This is a letter addressed to the Chief Electoral Officer, Treasury Buildings, Brisbane:—

"Dear Mr. Maguire,

"Just a few lines of congratulation on the general conduct of the elections under your supervision. We had only one thing to complain of. We could not get rolls for Bowen from the printing office, but everything else we found all that we could desire."

That letter is headed, "Queensland Country Party, Head Office, Country Press Chambers, 177 Edward street, Brisbane," and is dated 18 April—three days after the election—and is signed by J. A. J. Hunter, Campaign Director. That is another statement on the conduct of the election. I think that letter, coming from the Opposition to the Government, shows that everything was fair and aboveboard. Persons who were organising for the Q.P.P. came along to the office and to the Chief Electoral Officer and got all the rolls, documents, and information they wanted. What did they say? They had nothing but praise for the Electoral Office and the work done there and the courtesy they received. I have no statements here from Labour men or from the Labour people dealing with the work the Electoral Office did during the last election.

Let me pass now to these statements that are supposed to be charges. This press cutting says that Mr. Pie said—

"I made definite charges regarding weaknesses, faults, omissions, inefficiencies, and abuses of privileges in organisation before and on election day," said Mr. Pie. "All these can be proved, and certainly warrant a Royal Commission. The charges I made may be summarised as follows:"

The department has not yet received one definite charge about any of those matters. Mr. Pie's making of these definite charges is, I say, a deliberate untruth and a deliberate misstatement, because no charges have come to our office up till this morning, nearly five months after the date of the election.

The cutting continues—

"Disfranchisement of many servicemen in New Guinea by not providing polling

booths or polling facilities for the men in those areas."

We could not provide polling booths in forward areas.

Mr. Pie: New South Wales and Western Australia did.

Mr. GLEDSON: New South Wales did nothing of the sort.

Mr. Pie: Provision was made for them to vote.

Mr. GLEDSON: No more provision, in fact not the same provision, was made for New South Wales servicemen to vote as for Queensland servicemen. We had a double provision. We had the proxy vote in addition to the same postal voting facilities as New South Wales. I make the definite statement that we had the same postal voting facilities as New South Wales.

So far as voting was concerned we had double-barrelled action inasmuch as they could have taken advantage of the provisions for proxy voting in addition to postal voting. I wish to point out to the Committee that this was supposed to be a charge given to this electoral office. On 1 December, 1943, action was taken to prepare for the elections, knowing that they would be held some time in 1944—we did not know just when. A letter was sent from my office on 1 December and the Premier wrote on 6 December to the Prime Minister's Department asking if the Commonwealth Government would make provision for the co-operation of the Army, Navy and Air Force for the conduct of the Queensland elections, which it was proposed to hold some time in 1944. A reply was received on 11 January, 1944, intimating that all services would certainly co-operate to the utmost extent practicable to enable the votes of any personnel to be recorded so far as the exigencies of the service would permit. The letter proceeds—

"It would appear, however, that the methods proposed differ somewhat from those followed either in the recent Federal election or in some other State elections and certain practical difficulties are foreseen. For instance, it is noted that it is desired that assistant returning officers be appointed at Alice Springs and Darwin in the Northern Territory and at Port Moresby, Lae, Milne Bay, Salamau and other combat areas in New Guinea and that such assistant returning officers would be responsible for the distribution of postal vote applications, the issue of postal vote certificates and the keeping of records incidental thereto. It is assumed that they would also have certain responsibilities in connection with completed votes.

"It is not clear whether it is proposed that a separate assistant returning officer be appointed for each service at the various places suggested or that only one assistant returning officer be appointed at each place to cater for all services."

We immediately said that one assistant returning officer would do the whole of the services. The letter continues—

“It will be appreciated, however, that in advanced areas where army staff is already fully occupied by service duties it may prove extremely difficult for army personnel to be made available to handle satisfactorily the detailed work involved over a considerable period of time but it is suggested, however, that the most satisfactory solution of the problem would be the Queensland electoral authorities provide the necessary assistant returning officers. In view of the effective communication facilities available in New Guinea and Northern Territory it is considered that the work in each area could probably be performed by a single assistant returning officer possessing the requisite experience working in liaison with the local headquarters of the services and arrangements could, of course, be made through service channels for their transport to and accommodation at appropriate centres, i.e., Darwin and Port Moresby, during the relevant period. In any event from experience gained during the Federal and other State elections it is considered essential that direct personal liaison be effected at the earliest possible opportunity between Queensland electoral officials and the military authorities at L.H.Q., Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, so far as personnel serving outside the State of Queensland are concerned and at headquarters, L. of C. area, so far as personnel serving within the State of Queensland are concerned. The military authorities are accordingly prepared to detail a staff officer from L.H.Q. to visit Queensland and establish such liaison and on receipt of advice that your Government concurs will take the necessary action without delay.”

The Queensland Government stated that they were quite prepared to receive the liaison officer and discuss the whole matter. That officer came to Queensland—I will give his name, as the Commonwealth Government will not mind; it was Lieutenant-Colonel Weate—and made arrangements on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. He told us it was impossible to appoint army personnel outside Queensland in the combat areas, that it could not be possibly done, but the same arrangements would be made as were made for the Victorian, the South Australian and the New South Wales elections, that is, each commanding officer would immediately supply the Electoral Office in Queensland with the number of Queenslanders in his unit who had not received a proxy or a postal vote and immediately thereafter forms would be sent to the commanding officer who would distribute these forms to the members of his unit so that they might vote either by proxy or postal vote. That arrangement was made with Lieutenant-Colonel Weate and each commanding officer received orders to that effect.

Not only did that instruction go out in routine orders, but it was published in every paper throughout the State that was sent to the services in New Guinea. In addition,

a special edition of “Salt” was published and sent to all the services. It contained a guide to Queensland electors. In that journal will be seen photographs of the Leader of the Q.P.P., the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Government. It also contains a list of all the candidates in every electorate in Queensland, together with information as to the parties they represented.

The following conditions in connection with the Queensland poll were set out in that special edition for every member of the services:—

“Soldiers and sailors who voted in the Federal elections last August, and those appointed by units to guide voters, should remember that different conditions apply to Queensland State elections.

“In some ways the poll is simpler. Queensland’s is the only Parliament in Australia with only one House (the Legislative Assembly). Also, preference voting is not obligatory, as elsewhere. But the rules need careful perusal. Here they are—

You fulfil general conditions irrespective of age, if you are a member of the Services, male or female, and are a natural-born or naturalised British subject. You don’t need to be on an electoral roll.

At the same time, be sure that immediately before the day of your enlistment, appointment or call-up you had been living in (a) Australia continuously for six months; (b) Queensland continuously for three months; and (c) an electoral district of Queensland continuously for one month.

“All three are necessary to establish bona fide residence in the State.

“Depending on where you are, various methods of voting are available.

“If in Queensland, and on the roll, you vote on Poll Day (15 April) at any polling place, either as an ordinary or absent voter. If not on roll (see below for more on this) ask for the presiding officer at the booth. He will arrange the required declaration.

“Should you want a postal vote, you must apply for the certificate before 6 p.m. on Friday, 14 April (day before poll) at latest. This application goes to district returning officer, any State Electoral Registrar, or any specially appointed Returning Officer.

“If absent from Queensland, or about to leave Queensland, you must act before 6 p.m. on Friday, 14 April. You have two alternatives—

1. Apply for a postal vote certificate, to Principal Electoral Officer, any State Electoral Registrar, or any specially appointed Assistant Returning Officer. (This can be arranged with the nearest electoral authority in any State); or

2. Delegate another person to vote for you; this unit will arrange through the

Principal Electoral Officer—address, Treasury Building, Brisbane.

“Service electors can vote at any civilian booth, but at all important centres there will be special booths with Service staffs.

“In some areas neither civil nor service booths can be arranged; there unit C.Os. will act. Voters notify C.Os. of their desire to register postal votes. C.Os. arrange with Chief Electoral Officer, Brisbane, or nearest Returning Officer of unit area, for required forms to be returned to voters.

“As these must be back in time for votes to be recorded and posted by 6 p.m. on 15 April, neither voters nor units should lose time.

“The filling in of the ballot paper thus supplied to you is your job. When you have voted, put the paper in the envelope, which you hand back sealed.

“Before doing this you are entitled to ask the responsible officer for any advice you want on procedure.

“Returns posted after 6 p.m. on Poll Day will be worthless. Where post mark to show time of posting on 15 April can't be obtained, an officer or N.C.O. must certify on envelope that vote was recorded before 6 p.m.”

Those special arrangements were made. The article continues—

“Whether on the roll or not, you vote only for a candidate in electorate where you lived before joining up. If you are on the roll, this should give no trouble; if not, and you are not sure of your electorate, look at list of towns and streets on pages 10-14. This should help you decide. Candidates for each electorate are also shown on those pages.

“Returning officers have lists of all polling places, and thus of all areas. Your address on joining up can be checked against this. Wherever possible, voting places will display large posters with names of candidates and parties in all electorates.”

Mr. Muller: Why do you not read all that is in the document?

Mr. Macdonald: Especially the jokes.

Mr. GLEDSON: I appreciate the assistance of the hon. member for Fassifern but perhaps he should have this publication later so that he may read for himself what is of no interest to me on this occasion. It goes on to say—

“Rules for conduct of voting in units are set out in GRO of 3 March. Each unit is to ascertain the number of qualified electors, and forward a memorandum direct to the Principal Electoral Officer, Treasury Building, Brisbane.

“An officer is to be detailed in each unit to ensure the satisfactory working of arrangements.

“Wherever votes are recorded outside electorates, officers have been instructed to despatch ballot papers by earliest mail; from units in New Guinea, NT, SA and WA, by air mail.

“Correct way to vote: put the figure 1 in square opposite name of candidate of your choice, and leave it at that.

“But if you also write figures 2, 3, or any other number opposite names of other candidates, your vote will not be rejected on that account.

“Even if you put a cross against name of selected candidate, your vote may be allowed.

“This is because Queensland law permits electoral officer to allow any vote where the voter's intention is clear.

“Remember, all voting is secret.

“The procedure with postal votes in units where there are no booths has been explained above.

“If you vote at a booth in your own district, the ballot number on your ballot paper is folded down and you put the paper in the ballot box as soon as you have voted.

“Absentee votes do not bear a ballot number; the paper is blank. Voter consults list of candidates, writes name of candidate he selects, puts paper in envelope on front of which are voter's name, address and electoral district.

“At close of poll, an absent vote is sent in envelope to returning officer of electorate concerned who, before opening envelope, checks right of claimant to vote. If voter is on the roll, paper is taken unfolded from envelope, and placed in ballot box.”

All that appears in “Salt” which was sent to virtually the whole of the units. It contains also the policy statements of the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Kewpies, together with their photos. That publication clearly indicates that every effort was made to get in touch with every member in the services to give him a vote and to instruct him how it should be used. We can give them that opportunity but we cannot take them by the scruff of the neck and tell them that they must vote. We have no power to do that or anything like it. The members of the services, like the members of the public, can please themselves whether they vote or not. Although voting is compulsory we cannot say to them, “You must vote. Why did you not vote?” If the members of the services were on the Finistere Ranges they would not be very much interested about recording their votes. I know what the conditions were like at the time, because I was getting letters frequently from my own lad. I know from him that just two days before the elections his unit was moved to another place. It is no military secret now that two days before the elections over 2,000 troops were shifted to an island where we had a polling booth and we had to engage a special plane to take up extra ballot papers so that no-one would be denied a vote. We

took every means to see that a person who was entitled to a vote had an opportunity to record it. That was done and no-one can cast any aspersions on either the Under Secretary of the Department of Justice, who was in control of the elections, or on the Chief Electoral Officer for his conduct during the election. All the officers worked very hard night and day to get the papers away to the members of the services so that each would have an opportunity to vote but we cannot be held responsible if some of them did not vote. I am quite certain that quite a number did not vote, for various reasons. Some of them would not bother going for a ballot paper. I know that some of them would say, "I am not going to trouble unless I am compelled to vote." If the State law did not provide for compulsory voting we should probably have the same results in voting of civilians as those that occur in the other States where voting is not compulsory. Where voting is not compulsory only 30 per cent. to 40 per cent. of the people will vote and it is only where voting is compulsory that we are able to get a high percentage of voting. I am sure that some members of the forces would say, "I am not going to bother about voting; my trouble who is in Parliament! I do not worry about it. I am not concerned about who gets in, it will not make any difference to me." We have all heard sentiments like that expressed. We also know that the men were moved about from place to place so that it was impossible for commanding officers to keep in touch with all of the units and have them supplied with ballot papers, as we expected would be done. However, we seized every opportunity to provide the men with ballot papers. No doubt some of them were missed but we could not help that. That happens at every election. It happened at the Federal elections.

This is not the only complaint that the hon. member for Windsor has made. I have in my hand an extract from the Press containing a complaint the hon. member for Windsor made some time ago during the Federal elections that he went through the names of a number of persons to whom he had sent out letters that had been returned. He said he had checked them up and made out there were some 9,000-odd such letters.

Mr. Pie: 7,500.

Mr. GLEDSON: The Press statement that I have says 9,000. The Press statement on this allegation that 9,000-odd letters that had been returned to Mr. Pie because the addresses were not known at the address named continued by saying that he ought to have won the election by 3,000 votes. The hon. member inferred from the fact that these letters were returned through the post that these people were not entitled to be on on the roll, forgetting that they might have changed their addresses from one street to another, although still in the same electorate. The hon. member contended on that occasion that as a result of his check 6,000 persons had voted in Brisbane who had no right to vote. The hon. member was a bit sore because he was defeated.

Mr. Pie: No, I was very pleased.

Mr. GLEDSON: His contention was that if these votes had been taken off the majority of his opponent that it would have been he who would have been elected. That was his statement in the Press. What is his position now? He is very sore at the result of the election because he thought he was going to be the Treasurer of Queensland. (Opposition laughter.) As a matter of fact, he was going about openly stating that Bruce Pie will be Treasurer and the hon. member for Hamilton would be Premier, and that they would show the people how to administer the Government. (Laughter.)

Mr. Yeates: Who was to be Minister for Transport? (Renewed laughter.)

Mr. GLEDSON: We can understand why the hon. member for Windsor is so sore about the result of the election. He missed the boat.

Mr. Pie: I am not sore.

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member's party was to hold the reins of office without assistance from the recognised Opposition. They were to be right out in the cold shades of opposition. His party was going to be the Government and they would have nothing to do with the Country Party. The Country Party were not fit to be members of their aristocratic Government.

Mr. Larcombe: They would put them on some committees.

Mr. GLEDSON: They might put them on special committees to inquire into some of their actions.

If anyone knows of any cases of personation of voters on election day it is his bounden duty as a law-abiding citizen to place the information available to him at the disposal of my department so that action can be taken. I say definitely that not one man or woman has come into my department to make any statement or any charge against any person for personation at the election. One of the newspapers dealing with this matter said that the hon. member for Windsor had made charges. He has made his charges in such a way that he would not be responsible for them. I read this Press statement this morning. If the hon. member, or in fact any hon. member, will make a definite statement against any person who personated a voter at the recent elections it will enable my department to follow up the matter and take action against such a person.

Mr. Pie: Will you give a Royal Commission?

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member will get no Royal Commission to go on a fishing expedition. He wants a Royal Commission on these statements!

Mr. Wanstall: You are afraid.

Mr. GLEDSON: Afraid of what? No-one is afraid of the hon. member.

I say definitely that methods for dealing with impersonators are laid down in our law. Unfortunately we have no method of dealing with a member of Parliament who gets up and makes a lot of general statements he cannot prove. The only persons who can deal with him effectively are his electors and I think the electors of Windsor, when they become acquainted with the wild statements the hon. member has made here, without being able to prove them in one respect, will say "We want a man, a man of integrity, a man who will stand up to what he has to say, not a man who will hide behind the cloak of Parliament, and make statements about people he will not name."

Mr. Pie: I will name them; do not worry.

Mr. GLEDSON: The electors are the ones who will be able to deal with the hon. member for Windsor. We cannot.

Mr. Pie: Give us a Royal Commission.

Mr. GLEDSON: Give you what?

Mr. Pie: A Royal Commission on it, and I will name every one.

Mr. GLEDSON: Give you a Royal Commission on what?

Mr. Pie: On the whole of the elections.

Mr. GLEDSON: If the hon. member for Windsor knows anything at all about law and about Royal Commissions he should know that you cannot appoint a Royal Commission unless definite charges are laid. The charges must be in the form of a reference. How can you appoint anyone as a Royal Commissioner to inquire into anything unless you have definite charges? It would be impossible. If the hon. member for Windsor knows anything about it at all he should know that before you can appoint a Royal Commission you must lay down for the Royal Commissioner the terms of reference of what he has to inquire into. Does the hon. member think we could appoint a Royal Commission?

Mr. Pie: You could appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into it in general terms.

Mr. GLEDSON: You cannot appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into anything in general terms.

Mr. Pie: What about the Royal Commission on Fruit and Vegetables?

Mr. GLEDSON: If the hon. member for Windsor knows anything about law or Royal Commissions he should know that you must set out terms of reference and charges must be laid down to be inquired into. What are we going to inquire into if we have no charges? I think the hon. member for Windsor as he goes along will be able to pay as he learns, not pay as he earns. He will be able to pay for the statements he sometimes makes.

The next thing he says is that there was plural voting on election day. Where was the plural voting on election day? If anybody voted twice on election day the hon. member has the same remedy. However, he

has not given us the name of any person guilty of plural voting on election day. We have inquired into some apparent cases of plural voting but we have not been able to get one instance. In the case of the hon. member's own electorate, not one elector on the whole of the roll voted twice. He cannot say that there was any plural voting in the Windsor electorate.

Mr. Pie: It is the best electorate in Queensland.

Mr. GLEDSON: Nor can the hon. member say there was any plural voting in any other electorate, because from the information we have all the instances mentioned were mistakes by presiding officers or poll clerks.

The next thing the hon. member says is, "Disregard by a presiding officer of Section 52 of the Elections Act." If the hon. member has any idea that Section 52 of the Elections Act, dealing with the hours of polling, was infringed—

Mr. Pie: I did not say "Section 52." I said, "Section 56." If you look up "Hansard" you will see that I did.

Mr. GLEDSON: I will lay this statement on the table of the House. It says, "Section 52 of the Elections Act."

Mr. Pie: Do not go by Press statements. Go by "Hansard." That shows what I said.

Mr. GLEDSON: We have no charge laid here. The hon. member for Windsor said, "I will lay the charges in the Press." Now he says, "Don't go by the Press." He is continually whingeing and whining, and now he is whining because he says the Press has let him down.

Mr. Pie: You heard the charges made in this House under Section 56.

Mr. GLEDSON: There is nothing here about Section 56.

Mr. Pie: Read your "Hansard."

Mr. GLEDSON: I should have something to do if I had to read your speeches all the time.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. GLEDSON: If the hon. member has any charge to lay that the poll was not opened at 8 o'clock or closed at 6 o'clock, he should let us know. What does Section 56 say? I have not looked it up.

Mr. Pie: You do not even know your own Act.

Mr. GLEDSON: I do not know all the Act. I have to look it up to find out what is there. I cannot keep the whole of the Act in my mind. I do not pretend to be an encyclopaedia. I know some of the sections, quite sufficient to enable me to tell the hon. member for Windsor where he gets off.

Mr. Brand: The Attorney-General must not get cross.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member has never heard me cross in his life. That is one of the things I cannot afford to do. Section 56 says—

“(1) Questions to voters. The presiding officer may if he thinks fit, and shall if required by any candidate or scrutineer, put to any person claiming to be an elector, before he votes and not afterwards, the following questions or either of them:—

“1. Are you the same person whose name appears as (A. B., number —) in the roll for this electoral district?

“2. Have you already voted, either here or elsewhere at the present election for this electoral district?

“3. Are you disqualified from voting?”

Mr. Pie: It says “shall.”

Mr. GLEDSON: It does not say that he shall also put to that person the question, “Did you receive a letter?” or, “Did you receive a——”

Mr. Pie: It says, “shall if required.”

Mr. GLEDSON: It does not say he shall ask the person, “Have you removed from the residence you were at?” I will tell the Committee what caused the trouble. The hon. member for Ithaca, the Treasurer, very fully explained the whole position to the House the other day, but I will refer to it again. On election day, when the returning officer made his round of visiting his presiding officers, he went to the Foresters’ Hall in the Ithaca electorate, and found there a lady, who had collapsed, sitting on a chair. He went to her and asked of her what was wrong, “Oh,” she said, “What have I done wrong? What harm have I done here? Why should I be pestered and persecuted in this way?” He asked, “What is the matter?” She replied, “What have I done that I am not allowed to vote?” He said, “Come along.” She said, “I am not allowed to vote.”

Mr. Pie: Will you give the lady’s name?

Mr. GLEDSON: I will give you the lady’s name.

Mr. Pie: I should like you to.

Mr. GLEDSON: Her name is Mrs. Ogilvie.

Mr. Pie: And her address?

Mr. GLEDSON: The address is the address that appears on the roll. When the returning officer asked, “What is wrong?” she replied, “This gentleman that has come here who is representing the Q.P.P. is putting all this sort of questions to me.”

Mr. Brand: Did she say that?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. GLEDSON: She said that.

Mr. Brand: Did the returning officer tell you that?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Isis to obey my call to order. I have already called him to order twice, and if he does not obey my call I shall have to name him.

Mr. GLEDSON: The returning officer then said to the presiding officer, “You have your Act setting down what questions shall be asked, and you are not to allow any other questions to be asked of any voter. You must hold the poll in accordance with the Act, and if anyone is not acting in accordance with the law call a policeman and have him put out.” It was his duty as returning officer to see that the poll was not obstructed by these parties, who set out weeks before to send letters to people and have them returned through the Dead Letter Office.

Mr. Pie: That is not correct.

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon member through the whole course of the election set out to do things that were not correct. I will bring to light many things that he did.

Mr Pie: Bring them up.

Mr. GLEDSON: All in good time. I want to say that any returning officer who allowed an old lady or any voter to be treated in the way that lady was treated in the Foresters’ Hall at Ithaca without protecting her or saving her from interference by any individual, whether he be Labour, Country Party, Q.P. or any other party, would not be doing his duty. All returning officers are pledged to carry out their duties under this Act. That is what they are appointed for, and I think, Mr. Mann, that you and every other member will agree that the returning officers did their job in a proper way. Returning officers and presiding officers are present to do their job, and it is no part of that job to allow anyone to interfere with the conduct of the poll or prevent people from voting or treat them in such a way that they walk out of the polling booth without casting their votes. It would be a very easy way of winning an election, if tactics of that sort were allowed to be used. This party that has come into politics for the purpose of trying to run the State in its own particular way uses what is known as Big Business methods—“Crush all those who are opposing you, get rid of them, do not have anything to do with them.” Where should we be if we allowed elections to be conducted in that way?

The next charge is the use of wrong types of ballot papers. All the ballot papers were printed at the Government Printing Office and numbered from No. 1 on. How could there be wrong types of ballot papers? Such a statement is ridiculous in the extreme. Ballot papers are sent to the returning officers. They do not get their own ballot papers.

Mr. Pie: All postal ballot forms?

Mr. GLEDSON: Yes.

Mr. Pie: Wrong types were used.

Mr. GLEDSON: No. If some person obtained a postal ballot form used at the Federal election or some other election he might have used it. I am not saying anything like that could not be done but I say definitely that the postal ballot papers issued by the returning officers were provided for them and printed at the Government Printing Office. They were all the same form of postal ballot paper and postal ballot form. Wrong forms could not be used unless individuals were using an old form previously used in Queensland or a form used in the Federal election. Such forms were not issued by the returning officers but perhaps were used by somebody who had them in their houses.

The same thing applies to the wrong forms of declaration. At this stage I wish to point out that in Queensland we issued instructions to returning officers setting out the procedure at elections, and I table that for the information of hon. members. We also sent out information for all returning officers in connection with all the services. I lay that, too, on the table. After that, we did something that has never been done in any other election in that we sent out a synopsis of ballot papers and forms used in voting at elections. This form was prepared by the returning officer for Kelvin Grove, I think. It was sent to every returning officer for the use not only of himself but also of every presiding officer at every polling booth.

Mr. Pie: Did they all use them?

Mr. GLEDSON: That is a silly question for anyone to ask. I was not round every booth in Queensland on election day. It was not possible for me to do that. Does the hon. member think that I am a superman who could fly from one place to another to see what forms were used? I am merely saying that this form was prepared by a returning officer and sent to every returning officer for use by him and all his presiding officers. In addition to that, the Queensland People's Party organisers received copies of the forms for their guidance. This synopsis sets out every form required for every purpose. It sets out the requirements of every section of the Act so that every presiding officer and returning officer could turn to the section relevant to any particular case. I lay all these documents on the table to show that everything possible was done to ensure that the elections were conducted fairly.

Another statement—I cannot call them charges—was the wrong use of forms of return. How does the hon. member for Windsor know what forms of return were used? Has he been in the strong-room at Parliament House delving into the returns that were submitted to Parliament from each electorate? I have not had the opportunity of doing that. I do not know what forms were used in the returns. If the hon. member has been able to get into the strong-room to find out that information then this is the wrong place for him; he should be down round some of the banks. He could get more money outside than he can get here.

Another statement is, "Lack of uniformity of practice." How can there be lack of uniformity of practice?

Mr. Pie: You would not understand anything.

Mr. GLEDSON: Of course there is only one man who understands anything in this Parliament and that is the hon. member for Windsor. He would have us believe that the other 61 hon. members do not understand anything at all. The practice of conducting the elections is laid down in the Act and regulations.

Mr. Brand: And how are you amending it?

Mr. GLEDSON: When I have finished my speech hon. members will know how it is proposed to amend the Act. These instructions and forms are sent out to every returning officer and, as I have said, the practice of conducting elections is laid down in the Act and regulations. Every political candidate has the right to appoint a scrutineer, who may raise any objection if he is of the opinion that the practice of conducting the election is not in conformity with that laid down in the Elections Act. Did we get one complaint on that score from any scrutineer throughout the polling booths in the State at the last election? No, not one out of them all. Yet we have these statements made five months after the elections that there was a lack of uniformity in practice.

I come now to the next and last one—the matter of handling deletions from the roll, leaving the door wide open for impersonation. The practice of the Queensland Electoral Office over the years has been that the names shall remain on the roll unless there is positive evidence to prove that they should not be there. We have insisted that there shall be definite proof that a person's name should not be on the roll before it can be removed. That recalls to my mind a practice that occurred some years ago when the Opposition were in power in this State whereby it was not difficult for someone to lodge an objection to a name on the roll and thereby have it removed so that when the elector went to vote on election day he found that his name had been taken off the roll. Now, a name may not be removed from the roll unless there are good grounds for so doing. There must be positive proof to justify its removal, such as the fact that an elector has gone to another district and has transferred to another roll or that he has died or that he has left the State altogether. These complaints were made not only concerning the State elections but concerning the Federal elections too. It was complained that names were on the roll that should not be there. We shall continue the practice of insisting that there shall be positive proof before a name is removed from the roll.

I have dealt with all these statements, which are not really charges although I suppose I shall have to call them charges. I have a great deal more matter here that I could use but I do not want to take up the time of the Committee. It is proposed to amend the Act in the directions in which we believe it

can be improved so as to make for the better conduct of elections. For instance, it is proposed to amend Section 7 dealing with the signing of a declaration by a presiding officer who must take an oath of secrecy before conducting the ballot. The Act prescribes that such declaration shall be signed before a justice of the peace but it has been found, especially in some of the outback polling places, that it is inconvenient to get the services of a J.P. for this purpose and so it is proposed that the Act shall be amended to allow the declaration to be made before an elector in such circumstances.

The next provision in the Bill deals with persons whose applications for naturalisation have been granted before enrolment. Previously a person after becoming naturalised has had to wait a certain period in order to become qualified as an elector. Such person may have been residing in this State for ten years before applying to be naturalised. The law provides for a residence of six months in Australia, three months in Queensland and one month in an electorate before becoming entitled to enrolment. We are bringing the State law into line with the Commonwealth law. When a person becomes naturalised and possesses the qualifications of three months' residence in this State, together with one month in the electorate in which he is residing at the date of his naturalisation, he will be entitled to be enrolled for that electorate without having to wait a period of nine months, as at present.

The next clause deals with electors who have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Our law at present provides that the name of any elector sentenced to imprisonment shall be immediately erased from the electoral roll. We are bringing our law into line with that of other States in the Commonwealth by providing that if an elector is sentenced to one year's imprisonment his name shall be erased from the roll. We have had hundreds or thousands of cases, a number of them associated with the military forces, with which a sentence of from three to six months has been imposed, and it has been necessary to remove their names from the roll. This clause provides that unless the term of imprisonment is for twelve months or upwards the names will be retained on the roll.

Mr. Aikens: Does that include a person, say, sentenced to two years' imprisonment under the Criminal Code who has had that sentence suspended and been released on bond?

Mr. GLEDSON: If a person is sentenced and released on a bond he is still under sentence.

We are also providing that any elector who has been sentenced to any term of imprisonment and is serving it on polling day shall not be entitled to a vote. If he is serving a sentence of imprisonment on polling day, such sentence being under one year, his name is not taken off the roll, but we are providing that he shall not be entitled to vote no matter what the term may be.

Another provision in this Bill does away with the printing of what is called the quarterly roll. Since the war we have not been printing the quarterly roll although provision is made for it in the Act. Provision will be made for the printing of an annual roll, with a supplementary roll when necessary for the purpose of a general or a by-election. Such rolls will be complete right up to the issue of the writ. It has been found that the printing of a quarterly roll is only a waste of time and money. In fact, we have not been able to do it. This provision will mean our officers, instead of having three or four rolls to handle at an election, will need only an annual and a supplementary roll.

The next provision is to enable the Principal Electoral Officer to impose penalties in the same manner as the Commonwealth divisional electoral officer. That will obviate the necessity for the Principal Electoral Officer to take electors before the court for minor breaches of the Elections Act and enable him to impose a nominal penalty. I think that it will be found that this method will be preferable to the present one.

The next matter dealt with in this Bill is rather an important one. It amends Section 10A and 10B, which provide for absent and postal voting. We are providing that where application is made for an absent vote or a postal vote the particulars can be taken prior to the election. In other words, the declaration will be on hand ready to hand to the presiding officer. We hope by that means to get over a great many difficulties.

As was pointed out by some hon. members and by the report in the "Telegraph" that I read, some congestion did occur at those tables because the presiding officer had to sit down and write out the names and other particulars required in regard to these people. That took a certain amount of time. Under the amendment, however, forms will be issued and these people will be able to fill in the forms and get their votes without having to wait. By that means we hope to do away with much of the congestion that took place at absent-voting tables at the Brisbane City Hall.

We are also providing that people will be able to vote as absent voters prior to the election if they are on service and in Queensland in the same manner as they can if they are outside Queensland. We think that will make a big difference because these people will be able to record their votes prior to the election and thus save much congestion.

An Opposition Member: How long before the election?

Mr. GLEDSON: After the issue of the writ.

Mr. Wanstall: They can do that now under Section 71 (2).

Mr. GLEDSON: Only under certain circumstances. If a person is in the services and wishes to vote as an absent voter he has to attend the polling booth on election day.

The remainder is all machinery dealing with the services and how the returning officer shall deal with absent votes.

The next matter is that of the writ. We find there have been some difficulties, especially in times of floods, in getting the writs out to the returning officers in time for the election. The writs, of course, cannot be sent out until they are issued. We are providing that if there is any danger of a hold-up in the receipt of the writ by a returning officer we shall be able to wire the returning officer and inform him that the writ has been issued. He will be able to act on that telegram, even if the writ has not reached him—advertise the election and do whatever else is necessary. At the present time it is provided that the returning officer shall not advertise or take any step in the election until he gets the writ. This provision means that he will be able to take the preliminary steps.

Mr. Brand: Have you had any difficulty so far in that matter?

Mr. GLEDSON: We have had difficulties in getting writs to their destinations in time, especially for by-elections. In several cases we have had to postpone elections because of the difficulties we have encountered.

Mr. Pie: Have you power to postpone now?

Mr. GLEDSON: No.

Mr Pie: But you did postpone?

Mr. GLEDSON: We did postpone, but this will not mean a postponement of the writ. This will mean that the returning officer will be able to go on with the preliminaries. He has to advertise so many days before the nomination.

Mr. Pie: Have you power to postpone an election?

Mr. GLEDSON: Yes. We have had to postpone elections for various reasons.

The next amendment deals with the nomination paper. At present the Act provides that the nomination paper shall be signed by six nominators, but there is no provision that the nominee's name shall appear, with the result that mistakes sometimes arise in the nominee's name. Provision is now being made that the candidate himself shall sign the nomination paper. This will obviate the possibility of a man's being nominated under the wrong name; his name and consent will appear on the nomination paper.

Certain persons tried to blame the Electoral Office for such mistakes, like the hon. member for Windsor. The Electoral Office is not to blame but the person who nominated the candidate gave the wrong christian names perhaps or the christian names were transposed, as George James for James George. The candidate must now sign his own name and consequently afterwards no candidate will be able to say that his wrong name appears on the ballot paper, and blame the Electoral Office for that.

Mr. Luckins interjected.

Mr. GLEDSON: Advantage is not taken of a technicality like that. We do not wipe out Opposition members by reason of a mere technicality.

The next amendment is to allow a returning officer to complete his returns and send in his writs after he has completed the count of the absent votes. Section 62A of the Act deals with the service votes of those who have returned to Queensland and vote after notification is put on the roll that they have voted by proxy vote. The votes under Section 62A had to be kept in separate custody and sent to the returning officer. The Act provided that they could not be dealt with until the day before the return of the writ. We now provide that when the returning officer has completed all his absent votes he shall be able to take those votes into consideration and complete his return without having to delay until the day fixed for the return of the writ. If there are any outstanding votes, they shall stand out until the second day before the day fixed for the return of the writ, so that it gives the returning officer two days instead of one, in which to get his returns finished.

Mr. Wanstall: Is that in the same terms?

Mr. GLEDSON: It is in the same terms but it means he has two days instead of one, and it allows him, if he has completed all his count, to send his return in.

Mr. Nicklin: What about the number on the ballot paper?

Mr. GLEDSON: That was put in some years ago to give the Judge of the Elections Tribunal an opportunity of dealing with those votes should there be an appeal against the election. The Elections Tribunal is the only authority that can open the corner of the ballot paper and look at the number.

Mr. Brand: They do not have it on the Federal papers.

Mr. GLEDSON: That matter is not included in this Bill, but there is no reason why it should not be considered if members think it wise that it should be included. We shall probably consider it later on. It is not provided for in this Bill. I have given the reason for the practice and we should not alter it unless it was thought wise.

At present a voter can make application for a postal vote by reason of illness on polling day. We are adding the reasons of infirmity or approaching maternity. We are also making provision to enable a voter who happens to be five miles distant from a polling booth to make application for a postal vote. At times there were difficulties because of the lack of this provision. People a considerable distance from a booth were not able to get to the booth because of petrol restrictions and the shortage of tyres. Applications for permission by some such people to use postal votes were received but could not be granted because the Act made no provision for it, and we are now making the

necessary provision in this Bill and fixing the distance at five miles.

At present applications for postal votes must be made to the returning officer for the district in which the elector resides—the electorate for which he is entitled to vote. We now propose to extend that provision by enabling that application can be made to the returning officer for any electoral district. Queensland is a vast State and a voter enrolled for the Albert electorate may find himself away up at Mt. Isa or some other place. At times there may be difficulty of transit. In consequence we think it should be possible to make applications to the returning officer of any electorate.

The remainder of the Bill deals mostly with machinery matters.

Mr. Pie: Is there anything about soldiers' proxies—personal and proxy voting?

Mr. GLEDSON: We have not been able to find any method of dealing with that question and making it any easier for them than the method at present in use.

Mr. Pie: If the soldier is in Queensland, will he have a right to vote instead of the proxy?

Mr. GLEDSON: The Act provides that when any soldier returns to Queensland he can cancel his proxy and exercise his own personal vote. That provision was made last session.

Sometimes we have difficulty in finding an elector to sign an application for a postal vote if the applicant happens to be away from his own electorate. An elector of the Carpentaria electorate might be in Brisbane and might be unable to find another elector from Carpentaria in Brisbane to sign his application. We are now providing that the application may be signed by either a J.P. or an elector.

Another provision seeks to deal with lost writs. At the present time, if a writ is lost or destroyed by fire or flood or in an aeroplane accident—if it is being sent by air—we have no provision in the Act for issuing a copy. We now seek to provide that where a writ is lost or destroyed in any way a certified copy may be furnished and power is given to the Governor to accept it in place of the original writ.

That covers all the provisions in the Bill.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (12.51 p.m.): I think the Committee has had this morning the most extraordinary exhibition of the introduction of a Bill this Parliament has ever seen. The Minister spoke for one hour and a half, and for the first hour and ten minutes he did not say one word about the proposed amendments. That makes me wonder whether it is not possible that these amendments are introduced simply to give the minister an excuse for attacking the hon. member for Windsor and other hon. members of the Q.P.P.

Mr. Aikens: That is a very uncharitable view.

Mr. NICKLIN: It is the only logical view one can take after listening for one hour and ten minutes to matters that had nothing whatever to do with the amendments this Committee is called upon to consider. However, we must hand it to the Attorney-General for living up to his reputation as a stayer. (Laughter.) We have vivid memories of the evening when in this Chamber he polished the door knob of the Ipswich Court House for about two hours, and we must make him first favourite for the All Aged Stakes. (Renewed laughter.)

The Minister said that the reason for introducing these amendments was to correct any weaknesses that had cropped up in the administration of the Act. The amendments he detailed certainly are desirable, but I do not know that they are as necessary as many others for which there has been a crying need for a considerable time. I refer in particular to the need for some more stringent provisions for the purification of rolls, the restoration of preferential voting, and something more definite in connection with service votes. If the Minister had applied himself to those very necessary amendments to the Elections Act for one hour and a half, perhaps we might have been able to give him more commendation than we can for the time he has wasted this morning.

Let me deal with the need for more stringent provisions to bring about the purification of the rolls. This matter has been raised in this Chamber year after year but no notice has been taken by the Government of the suggestions made by hon. members. Why? Apparently they believe that the present laxity in the compilation of the State rolls must be to their advantage. I venture to say that the State rolls are the worst rolls in the whole of Australia. They are certainly the easiest on which to obtain enrolment and the most difficult from which to have names removed. The Act certainly makes duplication very easy and so enables the ghosts to walk on polling day.

Mr. Cooper: That is an easy statement to make.

Mr. NICKLIN: And an easy one to prove. In fact, there is no need for me to prove it because it has been proved time and again in this Chamber by several hon. members. Some hon. members have produced the evidence in the form of the number of letters that have been returned to them unclaimed by the addressees—electors who did not claim them. That is an excellent check on the condition of the rolls. I can recall the occasion on which the hon. member for Bundaberg nearly deluged the Chamber when he emptied a big box of unclaimed letters on the floor. I have had a number of letters returned to me when I have sent out circulars to my own electors. On one occasion when we made a check of the roll we removed 50-odd names from the roll for one small place in my electorate, names of persons some of whom had been dead for years. That is the condition of our rolls today. When the Attorney-General was adopting so many provisions in the Commonwealth Elections Act

as we see in the Bill he might easily have adopted the Commonwealth rolls for State purposes thereby saving expense and giving us a better roll for the State than we have today.

Then the hon. gentleman went to a great deal of trouble to deal with the subject of plural voting. He cited the reasons why there had been apparent double voting in eight cases in the Albert electorate and mentioned the Windsor electorate too, but he very conveniently forgot to mention the Townsville electorate in respect of which there were 63 allegations of plural voting. It would not be inappropriate to quote the following report from the Brisbane "Courier-Mail" of 14 June 1944:—

“Plural Votes Allegation.

“Allegation of plural voting in the Townsville electorate was made yesterday by Mr. E. P. O'Brien, Hermit Park Labour Party candidate at the recent State elections.

“He based his allegation on the fact that he had received from the returning officer (Mr. J. D. McLean, S.M.) a list of 63 names of electors, who, the returning officer said, 'appear to have voted at more than one polling place.'

“‘While the number of alleged double voters could not have affected the Townsville result in this instance, it might do so in a very close contest,’ said Mr. O'Brien. It certainly showed that improper practices could still be carried out.

“The Attorney-General (Mr. Gledson) said the list Mr. O'Brien had received was one usually sent out by returning officers to all candidates after an election. Mostly it was found that instead of there actually being double voting the name of an elector had been wrongly marked on the roll as having voted twice. This usually occurred in cases of electors with similar names, and generally could be put down to pressure of work on election day.

“‘If a deliberate case of double voting could be established,’ said the Minister, ‘action would be taken.’”

The Attorney-General went on to say that the returning officers had been asked to endeavour to check these allegations of plural voting in the various electorates and he gave the reasons advanced by these officers for the apparent irregularities, including personation. Surely to goodness that was a very good reason why further investigations should have been made into those allegations!

Plural voting, which does occur at election time, is made easier by the state of the rolls, that is, by the presence on the rolls of the names of large numbers of persons that should be erased from them. Our present State rolls carry many more names than they really should. During the local-authority elections, which were held before the last State election, most local authorities used the State rolls as a basis for compiling their rolls. In the shire clerks' reports you will find references to the large numbers of electors whose names were enrolled on the State

rolls who did not live within the areas concerned. Surely that evidence, together with evidence submitted by hon. members from time to time, goes to show that there is a very urgent need for some purification of the State rolls. The Attorney-General, when taking steps to amend the Elections Act, should have made this his No. 1 amendment.

One thing happened during the last State elections that put a large number of names on the State rolls of persons who really were not entitled to vote in this State. I refer to C.C.C. workers, munition workers, and other workers who were temporarily in this State in war-time employment. In December last, it having come to my notice that C.C.C. workers from other States were being enrolled in Queensland, I wrote to the Attorney-General—

“I have been informed that C.C.C. workers from other States are being enrolled in Queensland for electorates in which they are now working. Obviously a person can have only one residence in Australia for the purpose of voting at elections, and I should say that in law it would be the place which is his usual home, to which he expects to return, and for which he is entitled to be enrolled.

“As this is a matter of great importance under present circumstances, would you kindly advise me as to the interpretation placed upon Section 9 of the Act dealing with the period for which a person has to 'live' in Queensland before being entitled to enrolment? Has he 'lived' in Queensland for three months for the purposes of the Act if the residence to which he expects eventually to return (and for which he is probably enrolled) is in another State?”

The Attorney-General, with his usual courtesy, replied to me within a couple of days as follows:—

“Replying to your letter of 21 December I desire to inform you that police were instructed, when the general electoral canvass began, that members of the Civil Constructional Corps, munitions workers or persons engaged or employed on any work of defence under the Commonwealth of Australia who have come to Queensland from other States are bound by the compulsory enrolment provisions of the Electoral laws only if they have a domicile in this State.”

I want hon. members to particularly note the following:—

“But they may enrol voluntarily as electors if they possess the following qualifications:—

(a) They are natural-born or naturalised British subjects;

(b) They have lived within the Commonwealth of Australia for a continuous period of six months and in the State of Queensland for a continuous period of three months; and

(c) Have lived in an electoral district of Queensland for a continuous

period of one month immediately preceding the day of making the claim for enrolment.’

As a result of this action that was taken to enrol C.C.C. workers we find that we had workers in this State within a few weeks of the period of voting in this State as electors of Queensland and recording votes as electors of New South Wales or South Australia, the dates of whose elections were very close to the date of ours. Therefore, we had these persons exercising the privilege of being electors in two States at the same time. That is a negation of our democracy, which says that there should be one man, one vote. I have often heard hon. members opposite speaking very strongly about the old provision in the Local Authorities Act under which on some occasions an elector could claim more than one vote.

In the last election it did not matter if munition workers and C.C.C. workers had two votes as long as it was thought that the vote cast in Queensland would be of some advantage to the Government. That is quite wrong, and is an example of how bad a state the rolls are in.

Mr. O’Shea: What about a pastoral worker who is domiciled in New South Wales but works all the year in Queensland?

Mr. NICKLIN: That worker has the right to say where he is domiciled and the place where he is domiciled is the place for which he should be enrolled as an elector. It does not depend on anything, because the matter of domicile was settled in the High Court of Australia many years ago in a case in which a Chinaman who left Australia to visit his home land came back and was threatened with deportation because he was an unauthorised alien. In that case it was held that a man’s domicile was where he lived and where he intended to return to live. That is the interpretation of “domicile” that should be followed in the case of electors voting in different States.

Mr. O’Shea: You would disfranchise a man who had to leave his State to—

Mr. NICKLIN: I would not disfranchise anybody, but I do not agree with giving a man two votes. A man should decide where he is going to live and vote accordingly. C.C.C. workers are in a different class altogether from the workers referred to by my hon. friend opposite. C.C.C. workers were not here by choice. They were here on the instructions of the Commonwealth Government under National Security Regulations. If it is right to give C.C.C. workers votes in this State because they have lived in the Commonwealth for six months and in Queensland for one month, it is equally right to give a vote to every soldier from the southern States who has been stationed in Queensland for one month. The two organisations are virtually similar, the only difference being that one is a military organisation and the other is a compulsory civil organisation. I do not think any hon. member on the opposite side of the Committee can justify in any

way the laxity that occurred in the last State election in giving votes to C.C.C. workers from other States who had not been domiciled in this State and who had no intention of living here. That is plainly wrong and is just an example of how names can be put on the roll in Queensland when morally they should not be. I am sorry the hon. the Attorney-General overlooked this very important amendment.

Mr. Gledson: How would you disqualify a man if he is entitled to be on the roll?

Mr. NICKLIN: I refer the hon. the Attorney-General to his own letter to me. In one place he says, “only if they have a domicile in this State,” and then he says, “but they may enrol voluntarily.” That is a very fine legal point and if it was tested in a court of law I do not think any other decision could be given than that given by the High Court when it defined “domicile” in the case I quoted.

Even if there was any legal justification for the action that was taken, there is absolutely no moral justification for it and it is not right for any hon. member to endeavour to justify such a state of affairs. What right has any elector to exercise a vote in this State when he has no stake and no interest in the State and will get out of the State as soon as he possibly can? That is the position of the majority of C.C.C. workers.

Mr. Power: They are doing a very good job.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not talking about the job they are doing. I am talking about the moral right of enrolling them in this State when they are not electors of this State, and have no interest in this State whatsoever beyond the fact that they have been ordered to come here under war-time regulations to work in the organisation called the Civil Constructional Corps.

Mr. Walsh: I understand the C.P. in South Australia put all internees on the roll.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not concerned with what the C.P. in South Australia or any other State did. I am speaking for the C.P. in Queensland and we do not stand for things like that and hope we never shall. If we get the opportunity we will take steps to clean up this State’s electoral rolls.

The Attorney-General should have included in his Bill an amendment of greater importance than many of his suggestions. For example, there is the restoration of compulsory preferential voting in Queensland. It was undoubtedly a retrograde step to abolish the provision for it and there are many members on the Government benches who are very sorry at the action they took on that occasion. However, I will leave that for the moment.

There should be some definite provision in regard to the appointments of proxies by men in the fighting services. The provisions should be incorporated in the Act, and not merely be in the regulations, as at present. I am sure that after the experience of the last

State election it would be wise for the Attorney-General to include an amendment dealing with plural voting by soldiers who have given proxies, i.e., nominated persons to exercise proxy votes for them and themselves, because they are present in Queensland, voting in person because they do not know they can annul the proxy. Instead of the vote of the proxy, the personal vote of the soldier-electors should be recognised. After all, a man can very easily change his mind after he gives a proxy. I will be charitable and say that some of the members of the services who gave their proxy votes to me before they went overseas might have changed their mind when they came back and voted against me. Similarly, the Premier's proxies may have wanted to change their minds. The vote of the elector in Queensland should be recognised in preference to the vote of the proxy given by that elector.

Mr. Gledson: Tell us how we can do that.

Mr. NICKLIN: Amend the Act.

Mr. Gledson: In what way?

Mr. NICKLIN: Make the provision in the Act or the regulations under the Act. Surely the Attorney-General knows how to do it if he wants to do so?

Mr. Gledson: I do not.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am sorry my time has almost expired. I was glad to hear the Attorney-General mention that he was thinking of abolishing the voters' numbers on ballot papers. I had hoped that he would have included it in this Bill. It is a retrograde move to have numbers on ballot papers in this State. I do not know who introduced the system and I care less. I am expressing my personal opinion, that their abolition would be to the advantage of the Elections Act and would remove a fear that undoubtedly exists in the minds of some electors that their votes can be traced. The fact that that little number appears on the ballot paper undoubtedly gives them the idea that some political victimisation can take place. It has been drilled into some people that they had better vote the right way as there will be a check on them.

An Hon. Member: That is intimidation.

Mr. NICKLIN: It is, and that is why I want it removed, and suggest to the Minister that the Bill include provision for that.

Mr. PIE (Windsor) (2.32 p.m.): This morning I listened to the Attorney-General speaking about nothing for one hour and 30 minutes and for 10 minutes referring to the amendments proposed in this Bill. He referred to the Elections Tribunal. Do you not think, Mr. Mann, that we have gone into the matter very thoroughly. Do you not think we know the conditions of the Elections Tribunal? My friend the hon. member for Toowoong will deal with the legal aspect of the appointment of a Royal Commission. The Attorney-General displayed his ignorance of Royal Commissions. I say definitely

that the Attorney-General took advantage of his position in this Committee. He spoke for an hour and 40 minutes, leaving us only 25 minutes each in which to reply, and we cannot get an extension of time.

Mr. Walsh: That is the Standing Orders.

Mr. PIE: That is what happens in this Assembly. As to soldiers' votes, I make the definite charge that there were thousands and thousands of soldiers who were disfranchised in the last election because of lack of administration and forethought in the administration of the Elections Act.

I will make that definite statement here just as the hon. member for West Moreton made a statement that warranted a Royal Commission.

Let me refer to what I said here about Section 56, not Section 52. I was reported—

“Dealing with impersonation and plural voting, Mr. Pie said that the Ithaca Q.P.P. candidate instructed his scrutineers to challenge the votes where they had reason to believe that the person of that name had left the district. Under Section 56 of the Elections Act it was mandatory on the presiding officer to carry out the scrutineers' request.”

Yet we have presiding officers entirely disregarding this section, and the Attorney-General condones it, which is entirely wrong in a democracy such as ours.

It was said by the hon. member for Ithaca when I mentioned the contentious electorate of Ithaca that my statement was a lie, although it is not in “Hansard.” I say it is not a lie because I proved definitely that the scrutineers did demand that the presiding officer, under the Act, carry out that action, but he refused. The hon. member for Ithaca says that those names were picked haphazard from the roll.

Let me give another true statement that can be put before a Royal Commission. It is this—

“Mr. Groom had people call personally on every house. They inquired the names of the people living there. If they were out they inquired from next door. That way most of the people were accounted for in the area. They also inquired for any people who had died or left the district in the last two or three years.”

That information was then put not on lists, as the hon. member for Ithaca suggests, but on our master roll, and to every person they have not been able to account for was sent a first-class-mail letter, and the ones that were returned from that list of personal canvasses were then put on the master roll. Was that a haphazard method of collecting information? It certainly was not, and I say that over 250 names were collated in that way. Does the Attorney-General suggest that is a haphazard method? If he does we disagree and say that the Act warrants an amendment.

Now let us have a look at how these rolls are compiled. The Principal Electoral Officer

is authorised to use the services of every department in checking the rolls, and in this case the Police Department is used. The police compile lists of people who have left the district and submit such lists to the Electoral Office. Unfortunately the Elections Act apparently provides that there shall be three months' absence from a district before objection to a name can be taken. The receipt of the police lists, compiled a few weeks before the election, is actually the first notice the Electoral Office has of a person having left the district. Such lists then lie unused in the department for three months before any action can be taken. I understand the procedure as to objections to the names is then followed. This in practice means that the lists of the people who have left the district can be used for the purpose of compilation only long after the elections have been held. Therefore, the rolls as published on polling day actually contain the names of many hundreds of people who have left the electorate.

Ask the police to give an honest opinion of the system. One police officer reported to me that for weeks and weeks the police in his area were compiling lists of names of people who had left the various districts. They sent in over 1,000 names of people who were not entitled to be on the roll. When the final rolls were checked over with the lists, duplicates of which may still be seen in the police offices, over 750 people who should have been erased from the roll, had the check been made earlier, were still enrolled.

Mr. Hanlon: Is that in the Windsor electorate?

Mr. PIE: The Minister wants to put that man out of the police force. One does not have to look far to see a menace that cannot be controlled. It would be possible, armed with this information, for impersonation to be practised freely without its being revealed. It would seem that the rolls used by the returning officers are ultimately forwarded to the Clerk of the Parliament and never return to the Electoral Office. Therefore it is obvious that the department cannot check the list of people who have left the district as notified by the police with the rolls used in the elections to see if any of them are recorded as having voted. There is therefore nothing to say whether any of these persons still on the rolls and no longer in the electorate have been personated. Will the Government allow the scrutineers of the Queensland People's Party to check the rolls held by the Clerk of the Parliament showing the actual votes recorded against the police lists of people no longer living in the district? Let us have a Royal Commission on that point alone. Let the Clerk of the Parliament supply these lists and let us check them with the names of people who have left.

On the question of plural voting I make this definite charge in this Chamber—that there was plural voting in the last elections. I have proof from the returns supplied by the returning officers in the various electorates that plural voting was indulged in at the last election. In one electorate alone

it was disclosed that there were no fewer than 63 cases of plural voting, as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out. I suggest to hon. members that the situation disclosed in the returns is most serious. Not only has duplicate voting occurred through voting at two different polling booths, but there has been duplicate voting through absent votes. No fewer than 28 duplications disclosed in that return occurred where absent votes had been lodged and votes in the same names had been cast at polling booths. What is that but personation and plural voting? If we can assume that the absent vote is a genuine one then surely a serious attempt at personation has been made in that electorate in the names of the people known to be out of the electorate! I can table here the returns from that electorate and I suggest that they might reasonably form the basis for a substantial investigation and determination.

In addition, I have in my possession a return submitted by the returning officer for Merthyr showing 16 cases of plural voting. I particularly draw the attention of hon. members to the most important fact in the return, that is, that all these names represent duplication only through polling at two polling booths. Duplications through absent votes, as reported in the other report, are not reported. I presume that the reason for that would be that the Merthyr returning officer checked the absent votes under Section 69 with his roll and having found a polling-booth vote recorded, rejected the absent vote and because that vote was rejected he has not submitted a report on duplication where absent votes were involved. I maintain that probably the absent votes were the correct ones, although the votes recorded at the polling booth would be the ones counted. Surely, if it is only for the sake of ensuring uniformity of practice, this Merthyr report and the other one concerning duplication of voting should be fully inquired into.

I have proof, I think, that one place follows one practice and Merthyr another. We must have uniformity in practice and that is another charge I have made—that there is no uniformity of practice in the conduct of elections.

I submit also for the information of this Chamber that the returns submitted by the returning officer for Ithaca show 18 instances of duplicate voting, but it is to be noted that this return is not on the official form. The situation here disclosed, amongst others, is that the proxy vote of the soldier was allowed, but the soldier himself also claimed a vote, which was wrongfully disallowed. This means that the proxy vote has preference over the soldier's personal vote. There were hundreds of other instances of this, and I commend to the consideration of this Committee the necessity for amending the system of proxies, as suggested by my colleague, the hon. member for Toowong.

And now may I draw your attention to the prize packet of the plural-voting occurrences? I submit to this Chamber the return

on plural voting by the returning officer for Fortitude Valley.

This is on an entirely different form. Apparently this gentleman was not even aware of the necessity for making a return to the candidate covering plural voting because he submitted a most unsatisfactory report, and that only because of the insistence of the Queensland People's Party's candidate. He gives a list of 19 plural votes without any indication of where or how this duplication occurred, whether it was by plural voting at polling booths or a duplication between the polling booth and an absent vote. His list is accompanied by some naive letter in which he indicates that in his opinion none of the people voted twice. This is what he said—

“Dear Mrs. Tipper,

“Relative to attached: In my opinion, none of these people voted twice. I believe errors were made by presiding officers.

“(Signed) W. Cleary, R.O.”

That is not written on a form supplied by the Government; it is just a letter sent in his own handwriting.

I suggest these are matters that warrant the gravest of consideration of this Government. We must have uniformity of practice. That is a charge I definitely make—that there is no uniformity of practice in the various electorates.

Then we come to the appointment of returning officers. This is contentious, from my point of view. Let us analyse the appointment of the returning officer for Fortitude Valley. It should be borne in mind that all returning officers in elections have a casting vote. This is set out in Section 83 (5) of the Elections Act, which says—

“In the event of the number of votes for any two or more candidates being found to be equal, the returning officer shall decide by his casting vote which shall be elected.”

Because of this defined power of a casting vote and also because of the factor of impartiality of administration, surely it would be reasonable to expect of any administration that returning officers should not be men of any marked political bias!

Mr. Macdonald: Go to the Stanley.

Mr. PIE: The gentleman appointed as returning officer for Fortitude Valley is a well-known political worker in that electorate. It is reported that he was not only a former member of the A.L.P. Committee for Fortitude Valley but he was also an active worker for the Labour candidate for Fortitude Valley in past elections, and had in fact acted in the municipal elections as the official organiser for the Labour candidate. I personally have nothing to argue against the gentleman concerned, but I do urge that appointments of this character should preferably be made of gentlemen of no pronounced political bias. Further, when vacancies occur they should be advertised in the Press, and applications sought from qualified

people throughout the State. Remember, whilst the present system applies, returning officers have the power of appointment of presiding officers and in fact the whole staffs of their electorates. Surely this emphasises the necessity for public advertisement, and the appointment of men of impartial standing!

Now we come to the question of uniformity of practice under Section 69. In regard to the absent votes counted by returning officers, there is no uniformity of practice. Section 69 votes are absent votes often cast on polling day in another electoral district. Section 69 votes involve a declaration suited to the occasion in the form prescribed by the Elections Act. In quite a number of instances Section 69 votes have been admitted to the count despite the fact that the declaration forms were not signed by the presiding officers. Obviously, if a presiding officer has not signed this declaration and thereby, by his failure, disfranchised an elector, there might be an opportunity for serious dissatisfaction, so in order to cover this situation provision is made in Regulation 27, paragraph (2) that an absent voter's ballot paper shall not be rejected as informal by reason only of the fact that the presiding officer has omitted to attest the declaration of the voter if before the declaration of the poll the officer is satisfied that the omission was due to inadvertence and that the declaration was, as a matter of fact, duly signed in that official's presence. No attempt was made in the instances that came under our attention to have the omissions remedied. In some instances, Section 69 votes not signed by the presiding officer were admitted to the count and in others rejected completely. There was no uniformity of practice whatsoever. In a great many instances votes were accepted under Section 69, despite the fact that the presiding officer concerned had signed the declarations with a rubber stamp.

That form of signature, I think you will agree, is open to much misuse. This also must be tightened up to get uniformity of practice throughout all the electorates.

Then we come to the question of soldiers' votes. To my mind, there did not seem to be any clear understanding of the procedure in relation to soldiers' votes. In one electorate Section 69 votes were accepted when a voter's occupation showed that he was a soldier despite the fact that he was not on the roll. The declaration required from persons entitled to vote under Section 10A is entirely different from that required under Section 69, and the acceptance of those votes by the returning officer and their inclusion in the count is another grave irregularity. I should not have any of those soldiers disfranchised, but votes in this form were accepted in one district of an electorate and rejected in another. It seems to me that this irregularity could have been avoided if the presiding officers had been carefully and correctly instructed as to the manner in which those votes had to be handled.

Then we come to the question of proxy votes. There seems to be a great lack of

understanding by many presiding officers as to exactly how proxy votes should be handled. For instance, if a proxy was a nominee of an elector who was already on the roll the ordinary ballot paper was used and the vote placed in the ballot box in the ordinary way, but if the proxy was from a person entitled to vote pursuant to Section 10A, the ballot paper was not placed in the ballot box immediately. Numerous mistakes arose. Recorded in the return of duplicate votes of the returning officer for one electorate is the case of a gentleman of very high standing who is reported to have voted as an absent voter under Section 70, that is, as one who has left the State prior to polling day. Against that same man is also recorded a nominee vote, yet we all know he is not in the forces and therefore could not have been given a proxy. Obviously, what occurred was that the presiding officer recorded against the father's name in the roll a nominee vote cast for this gentleman's son, overlooking the fact that the son was a Section 10A voter. That obviously did not affect the count but it meant that the son's vote went into the ballot box as an ordinary vote instead of a Section 35B vote, and a highly respected and most esteemed citizen appeared on the list of duplicate voters. Again I urge that the administration be tightened up, and that clear and explicit instructions be given to officers so that these matters will not recur.

Finally, I suggest that the Clerk of this Parliament should examine the writs returned in this election, having in view Section 62A, paragraph (3) of the Elections Act, which says—

“The returning officer shall, until the day preceding the day named in the writ for its return, hold in separate custody all envelopes set aside, pursuant to subsection two of this section, for separate custody.”

Later on the same clause provides that the returning officer shall on the day preceding the day named in the writ for its return, proceed to allow and count the votes recorded. It therefore follows that all the writs returned should not be dated earlier than the day preceding the date of their return. It would seem also that if the Principal Electoral Officer has issued any progress figures that included Section 62A votes prior to the day preceding the date of the return of the writ the returning officer has opened envelopes and dealt with votes before the date set out in the Act.

I suggest that all the things I have mentioned are actually defects in the administration of the Elections Act. There is no uniformity in elections. In one electorate things are done in one way and in another they are done in another. Some votes are admitted and others are disallowed. In a close election where only a few hundred votes are involved, these things are very important. I have tried briefly to bring before this Committee the defects as I and other members of the Queensland People's Party see them because we feel it is our duty, as we have been elected by the people, to bring things

like this before the Committee so that they can be exposed to the public view and so that we can get that Royal Commission, which apparently hon. members on the other side of this Committee are afraid to give us.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (2.57 p.m.): As this is the first occasion I have spoken while you were in the chair, Mr. Mann, I take this opportunity of congratulating you on your elevation. I feel you will do justice to your position.

The introduction of this Bill has been taken by hon. members opposite as an opportunity to attack the administration of the Department of Justice and the officials of the Electoral Office. I have the highest praise for the work carried out by Mr. O'Hagan, the Under Secretary for Justice, and Mr. Maguire, the Principal Electoral Officer, and his staff. They worked very long hours and disregarded their personal comfort so that the electors of Queensland who were entitled to a vote could obtain one. Mention has been made of the disfranchisement of a number of soldiers. Every effort that could be made was made by both the Electoral Office and the Department of Justice so that soldiers could obtain a vote. It is all right for armchair strategists to sit in this Chamber and complain that men overseas did not vote. It is not always possible for a man in the front line to get a vote. I was interested in sending forms for proxy votes to soldiers from my own electorate and obtained the names and addresses of a number, after canvassing the members of my organisation. I obtained the soldiers' numbers from their relatives and sent forms direct. A large number were returned. The Q.P.P. came on the stage very late and were unable to obtain the number of proxy votes they were desirous of obtaining and therefore today are making an attack upon very excellent officials of the Department of Justice and the Electoral Office. We know that in times of war soldiers are frequently being transported from one place to another but a gentleman at Victoria military barracks knows the various movements of troops. That information was available, not to members of Parliament but to the Electoral Office, with the result that when troops were shifted from one place to another, as the Attorney-General pointed out this morning, it was necessary on one occasion to charter an aeroplane to take ballot papers to them so that they could record their votes. I, like other hon. members of this Committee, feel that those fighting for this country should have some say in the government and we should therefore make available to them every opportunity to cast their votes.

One would imagine that this was the only occasion in which it has been found that people are alleged to have voted on more than one occasion. We can go back to the time when the conduct of elections was under the control of the opponents of Labour—gentlemen similar to those sitting in opposition. The same set of circumstances operated as have been referred to by the hon. member for Windsor. A number of persons were alleged

to have voted twice in the Buranda electorate. The same applies to the Bulimba and Bowen electorates and virtually every electorate in Queensland. We find that in 1932 the same set of circumstances arose that have arisen now and I might add that Labour lost a Brisbane City Council by-election in Baroona as the result of the action of the Electoral Office, which was, however, quite within its rights. Today the system is that when a person fails to record a vote on election day a notice is sent by the Principal Electoral Officer to his last-known address. If no reply is received within a given period the name is removed from the roll but at times, particularly in rush periods, a presiding officer forgets to strike out the name of a person who has recorded a vote and people who have recorded votes sometimes receive letters telling them that they have not voted. In the by-election for Baroona 167 persons received notifications that they had not voted and a number replied they had voted for me on that occasion and a number said they would not reply to the letter because they had voted. They pointed out that they had been living in the same place for a number of years. As a result of the disfranchisement of a number of electors on that occasion the by-election was lost to Labour because these people were refused a vote.

It is all right for the hon. member for Windsor to stand in his place and speak of generalities. At a place in my electorate 197 applications for enrolment were made. As there are only one or two houses in that street off Herston Road I thought it remarkable that there should be 197 applications. I sent letters to those people and every one of them was returned unclaimed. Who put those names on the roll on that occasion? They were certainly not put on it by any member of the Australian Labour Party, because as the representative for that district I know what takes place in it. I am not suggesting that my opponent, Captain Cooper, was responsible for that. Like yourself, Mr. Mann, I found my opponent a very decent man. As a matter of fact, he apologised for opposing me and said that he was to have received the Toowong seat but during his absence he was jockeyed out of it by the present hon. member for Toowong. Who placed those 197 names on that roll? I have them in my possession and I am investigating the matter.

This is not the first election in which the hon. member for Windsor has made statements that he could not substantiate. We know that he was a candidate for a seat in the last Federal election, and during his campaign he made many wild statements. The then C.N.O. candidate for Brisbane, Mr. Fletcher, told the hon. member for Windsor that that was not the first occasion on which he made statements that he would have very great difficulty in substantiating at the declaration of the polls.

The hon. member stated that persons who had given proxies also voted personally. I have a number of proxies from members of the services and I think those soldiers who have

enough confidence in me to send them to me. I assure them that I appreciate what they have done. For the information of the hon. member, I would point out that once a proxy is signed by a soldier it is sent to the Electoral Office, where an authority is issued. The returning officer is advised of that, and when the rolls are sent to the presiding officers the letters "P.V." or "M.V." are placed against the name of the person giving the proxy. Because of this it is impossible for any duplication to take place at any polling booth. If the hon. member for Windsor knows of any definite case, let him report it.

The Leader of the Opposition wants the numbers deleted from ballot papers. I have no objection to that, although it is not provided for in the Bill, but he referred to the fact that there had been intimidation because of the existence of these numbers. The intimidation of an elector is an offence under the Act, and if the hon. gentleman knows of any specific cases he should report them, not make hearsay statements.

It is interesting to note, too, that after the last State election, the Leader of the Kewpies congratulated the Government and at the final count at all booths on that occasion the scrutineers for all parties signed declarations that they were satisfied with the conduct of the election. After those declarations had been signed, we find these statements made by the hon. member for Windsor and the hon. member for Toowong, who really should not have obtained that seat at all.

The hon. member for Windsor said that people who had died had had votes recorded on their behalf. That statement is entirely untrue and unwarranted, because immediately a person dies the Registrar-General notifies the Principal Electoral Officer, who removes the name from the roll.

Mr. Decker: Not always.

Mr. POWER: Of course he does. The hon. member for Sandgate is only trying to bolster up the argument advanced by the hon. member for Windsor.

It is a well-known fact that because of the war many men and women have left their homes to join the armed forces. Therefore how can the hon. member for Windsor or any other hon. member say that the letters that were sent out to various people and returned were not letters addressed to members of the fighting forces?

Mr. Pie: We made a check of them personally in their homes and they were not there.

Mr. POWER: My point is that many men and women have left their homes to join the fighting services, that the homes have been temporarily closed or that the people are not now living there. They are living in military barracks in different parts of the State or in different parts of the world. As my colleague the hon. member for Merthyr knows, when the electors knew that the people who were interviewing them were the paid agents of the Kewpie Party they pulled their legs and said that the persons whose

names were mentioned were not living there. Although thousands of men and women have left their homes to join the fighting forces they are still entitled to vote in accordance with the Elections Act and no soldier can have his name removed from a roll from the day of his enlistment to the day of his discharge from the Army. It is time the members of the Kewpie Party made themselves conversant with the situation.

The Kewpies have also objected that men from the South who were in C.C.C. camps had recorded votes in Queensland. The point is that unless a person has resided a certain time in the State he cannot be enrolled and thus he cannot have a vote, but the Government have provided that if a person lives in this State, according to the laws of the State he shall have some say in the election of its Government.

Mr. Gair interjected.

Mr. POWER: The Secretary for Mines brings to my mind the fact that a lady named Merna Gillies came to Queensland and made a false declaration for the purpose of becoming a political candidate against you, Mr. Mann. These political puritans opposite who condemn the Government on a certain score were quite prepared to bring a person from a southern State to become a political candidate in Queensland when she had no legal right at the time to make application for enrolment. Let these political puritans opposite clean up their own business before making any attack on the Government. The members in the C.C.C. camps were entitled to record their votes. Many of them had transferred from one electorate to another and whether they made their homes in Bowen, Barcaldine or elsewhere they were entitled to vote.

I do not propose to say much more other than to point out that the Bill is introduced in the interests of simplification and to rectify anomalies. It often happens that after an Act has been on the statute book for a while certain improvements are suggested in the course of administration, and, what is important, this Government have the courage to amend the law when it is found to be necessary. I deprecate the fact that hon. members opposite should have made an attack on such honourable gentlemen as Mr. O'Hagan and the staff of the Department of Justice and Mr. Maguire and the staff of the Electoral Office.

Mr. WANSTALL (Toowong) (3.13 p.m.): As this is the first opportunity I have had of speaking in Committee, I desire to congratulate you, Mr. Mann, on your appointment. Unfortunately I have not enough time to dwell on that matter but must get on with the real matter of the debate, seeing that the Attorney-General occupied one and a-half hours and that we have only 25 minutes in which to reply.

There are two outstanding features that strike one about the debate and the whole subject of the amendment of the electoral law, the first being the extraordinary touchi-

ness of the Government on the subject and the second the attempt by the Government to switch the charges that have been made from this side of the Committee against the Attorney-General to the officials of the Electoral Office. That is done deliberately, to draw the fire from the Attorney-General. I have not made any charge against any member of the Electoral Office nor do I intend to make any charge of dishonesty against them. My charge is that the Attorney-General through incompetence has created a ready-made and foolproof device to put in the hands of anyone so interested the power to obtain 50 to 60 votes without any connivance on the part of officers of the Electoral Office or any other officers having anything to do with the conduct of the election. I have shown by my contentions and arguments—supported by the leader of the bar in this State—that the only electoral provision that has been made for the recording of soldier proxy votes is the machinery that operates only during the absence of such soldier from this State after the making of such a nomination.

That charge has not been answered by the Attorney-General. He endeavoured in a weak and pusillanimous manner to counter it during the Address in Reply debate, but he merely begged the question. He pointed to Section 62A (5) and said, "There is the answer to your contention," and continuing said that once a nomination was made it remained in force until it was revoked. Is it not begging the question to say that if a soldier on active services makes a nomination and then returns to this State and does not revoke the nomination, it continues in operation, when it expressly states that it has force only during his absence? Yet the Attorney-General characteristically and classically begged the question by saying, "There is the answer." I say he has not answered the contention and that there is an obvious hiatus in the elections law. He is unwilling to correct this anomaly although he evidently realises its implications.

The Attorney-General also exhibited a petulance because I have persistently questioned him on the matter during this session. He has complained of the persistence of my questioning and says that my questions have little real value. Obviously he did not relish being cross-examined as to his administration of the Elections Act, but let me assure him through you, Mr. Mann, that my questions were not asked indiscriminately. On the contrary, they were asked as a result of a co-ordinated scheme that was worked out, and now that I have obtained the answers I will demonstrate some startling conclusions not only from them but from the admissions of the hon. gentleman. If I was persistent then my persistency was commensurate with the determined attempts on the part of the Attorney-General to evade answering my questions and his determined policy of hedging and evasion, which made it necessary for me to ask questions to follow up the answers and also to repeat questions in order to obtain an answer when a frank answer in the first place would have saved a great deal of time.

Mr. GLEDSON: Mr. Mann, I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member for Toowong in order in saying that he was compelled to repeat questions and ask further questions on the same subject because I as Attorney-General persisted in the policy of deliberate evasion in answering his questions? (Opposition interjections.) When hon. members opposite have finished I will resume. The rules of this House state that when a question is asked of the Minister and the Minister has answered it, the hon. member cannot again ask the same question in the same session. That is because there is no occasion to answer it, as the Minister has already done so. As the hon. member's statement that I deliberately hedged and evaded answering his questions is offensive to me, I ask that those words be withdrawn, as they are not in accordance with fact or the Standing Orders.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Toowong to withdraw the words that the Minister hedged and evaded in answering his questions.

Mr. WANSTALL: I do so, Mr. Mann, but I ask that the time taken up by the Minister be allowed me. (Laughter.)

Let us get on with these answers of the Attorney-General. If he did not attempt to evade the questions, he certainly made it necessary for me to obtain a cold chisel and hammer, as it were, to get an answer out of him. Eventually I did get my answer. Let us look at some of the questions, particularly those dealing with the service votes under Section 71B. As a result of the Attorney-General's admissions there is no speculation whatsoever about the fact that a large number of postal vote certificates were granted under Section 71B to non-enrolled persons without verification of the qualifications of the claimants. The Minister says that is not necessary. In other words, the officers granting the certificates accepted the ex-parte statements of the applicants as to their residential qualifications. That answer is contained in the answer by the Attorney-General to my Question 2 (b) and (c) asked on 29 August, 1944. He said he presumed that each of the issuing officers satisfied himself as to the residential qualifications of the applicants. I followed that answer up asking by what means they had satisfied themselves and he replied by the Act and Form 30B. Form 30B, on which the Attorney-General relies as a means of verification and a means of checking the statements, is the very claim form in which the person makes the claim for a vote. That is the form the Attorney-General says affords a check as to the statements contained in it. It can be no effective check. It amounts to this: I said to him, "Why did you issue those ballot papers?" and he replied, "Because the fellows claimed them." That is his reasoning! That is the only inference from his answer. He does not suggest that any other check was made whatever. This is the sort of logic that you would expect from Alice in Wonderland—that "Because he claims a vote I gave it to him and there is no need to check what he says." The only suggestion from the Attorney-General that the claim was

checked is to refer me to Form 30B, the form on which the voter made the claim.

See how easy it is for impersonation to occur under that system. Under this section—and here again the Attorney-General has provided me with the ammunition—1,700 votes were allowed. How many of those votes were in the names of non-existent persons? The Hon. the Attorney-General does not know, nor does any other hon. member of this Committee, how many of those votes were recorded in the names of non-existent persons, because no check was made on the qualifications of those persons.

Let us see what happens. A person sends in a Form 30B and states that he resided in the electorate of Boggabilla for one month. Nobody makes a check to see whether he ever did reside there. A Form 71B is issued to him and away he goes. That is the way those votes were issued, according to the Attorney-General's admission.

A Government Member: You are saying that the men in the services have been dishonest—

Mr. WANSTALL: I am not. I expected that. I say that unscrupulous partisans have the opportunity of claiming votes in the names of persons in the services whether they are existent or non-existent, and that device is open under that section. There is no way out of that inference.

Let us look at the similar position in relation to nomination of proxies. I have already dealt with the position as it stands generally but let us look at the Attorney-General's answer. Again his admission to me in this Chamber demonstrated conclusively that 1,000 certificates of nomination were issued in the names of non-enrolled persons without any verification of their right to vote in any electorate. Let us see where that admission comes from. The Attorney-General told me that 1,012 certificates have been issued in the names of persons whose names had not appeared on any roll and who had never made a claim for enrolment.

A Government Member: They were soldiers under 21.

Mr. WANSTALL: I do not complain of the issue of a certificate to such a person if the issue is made after proper verification and checking. 1,012 of these had never made a claim for enrolment. On 24 August last the Attorney-General, in answer to my question as to the means by which the Principal Electoral Officer satisfied himself, said "By a reference to the records of his office and by such inquiries as were considered necessary." Would it not be obvious to a fourth-form schoolboy that the Principal Electoral Officer has not and can never have had in his office any records relating to a person who is not on the roll and who has never made a claim for enrolment. The Attorney-General insults the intelligence of hon. members by suggesting that the Principal Electoral Officer did check the claims of these persons by referring to non-existent records. The whole thing is absurd and it reflects little credit upon

His Majesty's Attorney-General that he should give such an answer to a question asked by a member.

Knowing very well that no such records were held by the Principal Electoral Officer, I asked the Attorney-General, "What are these records? What records did the Principal Electoral Officer consult in order to satisfy himself in relation to a person who is not on the roll and who has never made a claim for enrolment?" The Attorney-General's answer is staggering. It is a classic. I ask him a question in relation to a person not on a roll and who has never made a claim for enrolment and he says, "From W." That is a claim for enrolment. I ask him what record he has in relation to a person who has never made a claim for enrolment and the answer he gives me is "The claim for enrolment." It does not make sense to me nor to anybody else, but I accept his answer because it indicates that no check was made. If the only check the Attorney-General can suggest in answer to my persistent, daily-repeated questions is a form that obviously does not apply to the circumstances about which I was questioning him, the inference is obvious. There is no such form and there is no such check. Indeed, there can be no such form.

Let us look at these inquiries. He says, "Such inquiries as were considered necessary." That is the sort of answer I get. I ask for particulars and am told, "Generally from officers of the police force." I am still trying to find out just how many of these certificates were issued indiscriminately as blind stabs in the dark—and that is what the public want to know—and I am told by the Hon. the Attorney-General that only 14 of these 1,012 were checked by the police. That means that virtually 1,000 certificates were issued to persons about whom the Principal Electoral Officer has no record and about whom he made no inquiries. That is one ground for the appointment of a Royal Commission. I do not suggest that these things were done deliberately by the Principal Electoral Officer, but the maintenance of such a system leaves the door wide open for abuse and personation.

Any unscrupulous person knowing of that system—and it is generally known—could send in 50 or 60 claims in the names of non-existent persons. Knowing the system in vogue in that office and knowing that there would be no check through the Police Department and that there was no record, a person could send in the name of a non-existent individual, and in due course would receive a certificate of nomination. Does not that justify a Royal Commission when the number reaches 1,000? The qualifications that entitle a person to one of these certificates are definite and precise. The only persons in whose names they can be issued are persons who are members of the forces, who are absent and have resided in accordance with the requirements of the Act in a particular electorate for one month prior to their enlistment. How could any reasonable man be satisfied as to the existence of each one of these qualifications in relation to a person about whom he

has no record, about whom he has made no personal inquiry? How could he be satisfied that a person has resided in the electorate of Toowong for one month prior to his enlistment unless he sent the police officer to inquire? It is ridiculous to say otherwise, but we have the Attorney-General's admission that 1,000 certificates were issued under those circumstances. The whole thing is absurd. Let me be charitable: even the coincidence of the same name as a family on the roll is not sufficient. That does not indicate that he is the son of the family actually residing in the electorate for one month continuously prior to his enlistment. How could any reasonable man rely upon that when issuing a certificate? If a person wanted to fake a claim he would obviously use the name of a family on the roll or send in a name that was not on the roll. The door is left wide open.

There were 1,700 soldier postal votes issued without any check whatever according to the Attorney-General's admission and 1,000 soldier proxy votes issued during the last election under similar circumstances. These conclusions are established beyond the possibility of rebuttal because they are based on the Attorney-General's admissions, and in these admissions he has committed himself beyond any possibility of retraction. Will he now give us a Royal Commission? Will he find out how many of these 2,700 votes should never have been recorded? Are not the public entitled to that information? This morning we were given a gem of wisdom by the Attorney-General as to why it was impossible to appoint a Royal Commission unless charges were specified and particularised into charges (a), (b), (c) and (d). What an absurd and ridiculous statement to come from the lips of the Attorney-General! It was the most ridiculous statement I have ever heard. Does the hon. gentleman not know that the Royal Commission on Fruit and Vegetables was appointed in general and not in specific terms?

Mr. Gledson: In specific terms.

Mr. WANSTALL: The last commission that he appointed is appointed in these terms, "Whereas it is expedient in the public interest that full and careful inquiry should be made into the production of, the dealing with, the supply of and the marketing (including buying and selling) of fruit and/or vegetables."

Mr. Gledson: And so on.

Mr. WANSTALL: To proceed a little further. It states, "and in particular but without in any way limiting the scope of such inquiry, into the following matters in relation to fruit and/or vegetables." This is one of the things—"The present and probable future demand." Nevertheless, the Attorney-General gets on his feet in this Chamber and says a Royal Commission can be appointed only in relation to particularised or specific charges. One has been appointed to inquire into the probable future demands of a particular industry. How absurd the whole thing

is! If the Attorney-General wants us to estimate his intelligence in that regard by that, we will accept it, but if he does not let him withdraw it.

Now to proceed with the other ridiculous statement he made when he asked why we did not go to the Elections Tribunal: there is no better place in this land and in any democracy for any elected representatives of the people to make charges against the public administration of any legislation than the floor of Parliament. This is the place, and the only place, to do this. It was the place in which the hon. member for West Moreton made his charges in relation to fruit and vegetables and he was successful in obtaining the appointment of a Royal Commission. Notwithstanding all this, the Attorney-General asks why we do not go to the Elections Tribunal. I will tell the hon. gentleman why we cannot: unless one can establish to the satisfaction of that tribunal that the charges to be made are likely to affect the result of the election, one cannot get anywhere before that tribunal. The hon. gentleman knows that quite well. These are not necessarily matters, Mr. Mann, that would possibly upset any candidate or any member elected to this Parliament but they are misuses and gerrymanderings that leave in the minds of the public a definite and clear impression that there is tampering with the ballot box.

Let me assure every hon. member on the other side, the Attorney-General in particular, that if there is one job that I will do during this term of Parliament it is to clean up the electoral machinery of this State. If I can get the co-operation and help of the Attorney-General my task will be much easier, but irrespective of whether I get that co-operation I will persevere in that task. I will not shrink from its unpleasantness nor cool in my ardour about doing it. I will not swerve from my purpose until the elections of this State are, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. They are not now. Charges have been made and followed up with proof by my colleague, the hon. member for Windsor. Those charges have not been answered. My charges as to the illegality of soldiers' votes have not been answered, and I challenge the Attorney-General to prove that my contentions are wrong.

The other day the hon. gentleman quoted the opinion of some anonymous legal gentleman that he peddled in this House—we have not even the privilege of knowing who he is—and claimed that that was an answer. I stand here and put forward my contentions and arguments. I am here to be criticised, but this anonymous person behind whom the Attorney-General shelters is not here, nor is he answerable to this Parliament. I have voiced not only my opinion but that of the Leader of the Queensland Bar, and I challenge the Attorney-General to prove that it is wrong. I repeat that thousands upon thousands of votes were recorded illegally and wrongly in this State on election day because of the bungling of the Attorney-General, because of his incompetence, his

inability to appreciate and interpret the sections of his own Act.

In conclusion, I submit that this Bill is but a half-hearted attempt to clean up the abuses and misuses of the Elections Act. There are hundreds more amendments that could be brought before us. I have prepared a schedule of amendments that I propose to submit to the Attorney-General, and, to give him his due, he has told me that he will consider them. In the meantime I congratulate him upon accepting the amendment proposed by me during my speech on the Address in Reply with reference to Section 62A.

Hon. D. A. GLEDSON (Ipswich—Attorney-General) (3.36 p.m.): I wish to scotch the statement made by the hon. member for Toowong before it goes any further. He says that thousands of votes were wrongly recorded on election day. The soldiers, sailors airmen and nursing sisters who joined the services and who are under 21 years of age are just as honourable as the hon. member for Toowong.

Mr. WANSTALL: I rise to a point of order. I made it perfectly clear that I was not making any attack at all on the honour of any of those members of the services. As the Attorney-General well knows, my point was that his system is open to misuse by unscrupulous partisans who could claim votes in the names of those persons.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the Attorney-General to accept the denial of the hon. member for Toowong.

Mr. COOPER: Mr. Mann, I desire to know what the statement is. Does the hon. member want the Attorney-General to withdraw the statement that the service men and service women are honest?

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the Attorney-General to accept the denial of the hon. member for Toowong that he said that soldiers and other members of the services were dishonourable.

Mr. GLEDSON: I accept that denial by another hon. member of this Committee but I repeat that those men and women who are in the services and under 21 years of age and who have been given the right to vote are just as honourable as the hon. member for Toowong.

The hon. member for Toowong signed an application to be enrolled and to be given the right to vote as an elector of Queensland. That application was witnessed and forwarded to the Electoral Office. Upon receipt of that form by the office the hon. member was given the right to vote. No policeman went to his residence to inquire whether he was there or whether he was entitled to be enrolled. The same conditions apply to these people. They sign this application form. Each shows on it his name, unit, or the ship upon which he is stationed, he gives his address and his signature. That declaration is made before a witness who signs the form, giving his rank.

He certifies that he is entitled to vote in respect of that electorate and that he belongs

to his unit. He makes a similar declaration to that made by the hon. member for Toowong when he declares that his name should be enrolled, yet the hon. member suggests that we should send out a policeman to every one of these men and women who have applied for a vote under the appropriate section simply to see whether they are telling a lie or not. This Government may have to consider their position if the Q.P.P. crowd have in mind what they did when a policeman had to be sent out to see whether a person was entitled to be on the roll. That matter was published in the Press; everybody knew of it. A policeman went out to see if the statements were correct and then we have it in high glee from the hon. member for Toowong that a policeman should go out to every one of these boys and girls who signed a declaration and had it witnessed to give him or her the right to vote to see if the statements on it were correct. I leave it to hon. members and to the public to judge whether the Attorney-General has acted correctly on behalf of the Government or whether we should follow the suggestion of the hon. member for Toowong that a policeman should interview every person who signs a declaration seeking the right to vote.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (3.41 p.m.): I have only a few observations to make but as a new member I crave your indulgence, Mr. Mann, because I am not sure whether I am permitted to make my suggestions at this stage of the Bill. I was rather surprised at the statements by the hon. member for Toowong, who I understand is, like my colleague on my left, the hon. member for Bowen, a member of the legal fraternity. He has quoted many obvious errors without giving a reasonable solution of them. It is quite well known that some unscrupulous people do vote twice or three times at an election and it is also quite well known that unscrupulous people vote in the names of someone else on the roll and at the same time exercise a vote for themselves. But how are the Government going to catch them? All that the Government can do or all that any authority can do is to bring down the law but it is not the job of the Attorney-General or hon. members to police the law. Every law that is introduced provides certain penalties for offences. If the offender can be caught no Government would be foolish enough to give an assurance that he would not be punished. We know that the offenders will be punished but we want to know how to catch them, so that the Attorney-General can punish them.

Opposition Members: Clean up the roll.

Mr. AIKENS: I am going to suggest that. There are certain anomalies in connection with the roll. As one who has been campaigning for the Labour Party for the best part of 30 years, I know from my active work in connection with the polls that on every election day there are scores and scores of people who have lived in a particular street or at a particular address who find that for some reason or other, known to

no-one apparently, their names have been crossed off the roll.

Mr. Cooper: That happens at every election.

Mr. AIKENS: That is so; it is one of the distressing features of every election. Numbers of people well known to me and well known to even the returning officer have had their names crossed off the rolls for no apparent reason. They fill in a form claiming the right to vote under the section prescribing that procedure but I suggest that some arrangements should be made so that at the main polling booths at least there should be an officer from the Election Office to take down the particulars of the elector concerned and issue to him an electoral form or card notifying him of his enrolment for the future. I have known people to come along to vote who have complained, "I was off the roll at the last election" and on being asked whether they have become enrolled since then said, "No, I did not bother. I thought that when I filled in that form at the polling booth at the last elections I was automatically being enrolled." Thereupon I make the suggestion to the Attorney-General that an officer of the Electoral Office or a representative of his department should attend the main polling booths throughout the State to see that such people are enrolled.

It is also well known to us that many people are negligent and at times too purposely negligent in not having their names placed on the rolls. I want to tell the hon. member for Toowong and the hon. member for Windsor that on every occasion that I make a charge in this Chamber I shall be prepared to substantiate it. I will give one instance of a man who should have known better. Mr. Dwyer, the P.M. at Bowen in 1941, was also the returning officer for the Bowen electorate in the 1941 election.

Dwyer in 1942 was transferred to Gladstone, yet in the 1944 election, two years after he was transferred from Bowen to Gladstone, he voted for Bowen as an absentee at Gladstone. There was nothing wrong with that—the man exercised only one vote; he did not get a vote by fraudulent means—but the fact remains that that man should have set an example to other people instead of having two years' residence in Gladstone before having his name transferred from the Bowen to the Port Curtis roll. Whilst these things go on they leave the door wide open to plural voting and give anyone with a criminal intent the opportunity of saying "Dwyer's name is on the roll; he assuredly has been transferred, so I will sneak along to Bulkaroo, or to somewhere where I happen to be friends with the presiding officer, or to where the presiding officer does not know Dwyer and vote in Dwyer's name." It leaves the door wide open to that practice. There is no provision in the Act to punish a man or check any action against a man who leaves the door wide open like that. I am not suggesting anything against Dwyer in any way and I will say in all fairness to him that the lapse in failing to transfer may

have been the result of ordinary carelessness.

Mr. Gair: Mr. Dwyer was for a long time sick and has since died.

Mr. AIKENS: That may be so. I was merely pointing out that while there was no fraudulent intent on Dwyer's part the fact remained that he did not, as he should have done, transfer his name from the Bowen to the Port Curtis roll. I know that quite a lot of people do not transfer through carelessness. I do suggest that if anyone knows plural voting is being practised and has knowledge of how these criminals—for they are criminals—can be caught it is his duty to acquaint Parliament with his knowledge so that we can get onto them.

There is another matter that should be incorporated in any amendment of the Elections Act. I refer to the denial of freedom of religion to certain religious sects in Queensland under our Elections Act as it stands today. We have in Mundingburra, and I suppose throughout the State, a sect that observes its sabbath on a Saturday. Its members are debarred through their religious beliefs from exercising the franchise on a Saturday. No provision is made in the Act for these people to get a vote. If the section dealing with postal votes will not give them such a vote, I suggest that it is very desirable that the Attorney-General should enlarge that section to enable the members of this sect, who because of their religious beliefs, cannot attend a polling booth on a Saturday, to exercise the postal vote. I know that in the Railway Department there is no such thing as freedom of religion. Men in that department are persecuted because of their religious beliefs. We had an instance recently in the case of driver O'Brien in Townsville. I hope that the Attorney-General will see that anyone whose religious beliefs will not permit of his attending a polling booth on Saturday will have some opportunity made available to him, possibly by means of the postal vote, to exercise his franchise.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) (3.48 p.m.): Hon. members of this Committee will require something more than the declamations of the hon. member for Windsor before they accept his challenge and request the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the very sweeping allegations he made, firstly against the Attorney-General and secondly against the officers of the Electoral Office. We find also the hon. member for Toowong remarking on the extreme touchiness of members of the Government when this subject was being discussed in the Chamber. I deny that any touchiness was displayed on this side, but if that is so it is more than matched by the extreme persistency of the members of the Q.P.P. in repeating baseless allegations and magnifying minor irregularities committed by minor officials far removed from the close supervision of the Principal Electoral Officer.

What is the gravamen of the charge that has been laid by the hon. member for Wind-

sor? He states that thousands of soldiers in New Guinea were disfranchised. He also referred to the partiality of returning officers and he criticised the extension of plural voting at the last election. I propose to deal with the two last matters first because I propose to spend the greater part of my time on his allegation concerning the disfranchisement of soldiers. The hon. member for Windsor maintained that the Principal Electoral Officer should ensure that only men of proved impartiality were entrusted with the duty of acting as presiding officers. That is a very laudable desire, but his wish to examine 3,000 or 4,000 applications for these particular positions at election time can hardly be gratified. Who is to determine this impartiality? Every man in the community is inclined to some political opinion and some political party. Indeed, if he does not hold those convictions he is not carrying his full responsibilities of citizenship.

All men at some time or another, if asked to give an opinion on any matter, are possibly influenced by their political convictions. If the hon. members comprising the Queensland People's Party contend that there should be a weeding out of people who have allegedly been partial in their administration, I think members of the Government too would be entitled to challenge and ask for the removal of certain men who have proved themselves to be partial towards Opposition members. I had an instance of that in my own electorate of Toowoomba in 1941 when the unfortunate blight of sectarianism rocketed throughout Queensland. We had an instance in which a school-teacher who was acting as presiding officer at the election said to some people, "Do not forget, you have the option of exercising a contingent vote." That was a clear indication that that man was prostituting the high office he held. Unfortunately, the information did not reach me in time to take any action against the officer concerned, but I certainly spoke to him about it later on. Possibly we should find the same things operating in other parts of the State. All that the departmental officers can do is to get men with proved administrative experience to carry out this work and to see that the Act is administered in the proper way.

With regard to the allegation of plural voting, I do not think any Government alive to their responsibilities would prostitute the power conferred on them by appointing a Royal Commission on the vague allegations of the hon. member for Windsor. He referred to many minor irregularities that have been committed by electoral officers throughout the State, and knowing Mr. Maguire as I do I am confident that he would be only too happy to rectify these things on all occasions when the hon. member for Windsor directed his attention to them. No man sitting in Brisbane can ensure that there will be strict uniformity throughout the State in all the small things associated with the administration of the Electoral Office. All those things that the hon. member for Windsor did authenticate in this chamber were very minor and would not warrant the appointment of a Royal Commission. If he or any other hon. members of

the Opposition can bring forward any evidence of infringement or irregularity regarding personation or plural voting, I am confident that speedy action will be taken to deal with the offenders. Referring again to my electorate of Toowoomba, I instance one person who personated another with good but misguided intentions. He was very quickly arraigned before the proper tribunal and was fined a fairly heavy penalty. Because of that conviction, he lost his employment in the Queensland Railway Department.

A Government Member: Despite the fact that he was a good Labour supporter?

Mr. DUGGAN: That is so, despite the fact that he was a good Labour supporter, and I think the Hon. the Minister for Transport might do well to examine the system that prevails in the department whereby an employee's employment is terminated simply because of some technical offence against some law or other.

I now get on to a very important accusation by the hon. member for Windsor, that is, that thousands of soldiers were disfranchised in New Guinea. I had the privilege of serving in New Guinea for some time as company commander, adjutant of an infantry battalion, and staff captain of an infantry brigade. I was, therefore, in the fortunate position of exercising supervision over all external correspondence affecting the administration of those units. Because of my experience and because of my position of staff captain of an infantry brigade, I was chosen to attend a staff college for officers, where I had an opportunity of meeting many other officers. I found there that something more was required than the elaborate machinery provided by the Electoral Office to ensure that soldiers obtained their votes, and the something more that should have been provided was beyond the competence of the Attorney-General or the officers of his department to provide, because it dealt with the human factor of the officer himself. I make no allegations against or reflections on the officers in their military capacity. My experience is that since a certain pruning was done both by battalion commanders and by officers in the higher administrative appointments, many of the incompetent officers who were unfortunately in the army in the early years have been eliminated, and the officers to whom I refer bore splendid military records. I do not, I say, make any reflection on their military capacity, but I did find that among the officer class there was very strong objection, first of all, to any form of political direction or political requests, and it was emphasised to a far greater degree if those requests came from a Labour Government or Labour parliamentarians. I say that definitely. At that staff school, which was attended by about 50 officers, I can without fear of successful contradiction say that I and one other doubtful Labour supporter were the only two officers who held Labour convictions.

I have seen correspondence passing through my hands from Federal members to the

Minister for the Army coming forward for perusal and observed the attitude of some officers who would have pitched it into the fire but were afraid that if there was no acknowledgment from the unit concerning the members' representations they might find themselves in trouble. Whatever deficiencies might have been prevalent on or before election day as far as the soldiers were concerned were due to causes beyond the control and responsibility of the Attorney-General of this State. I have seen in various Army publications, "Salt" for instance, general routine orders and unit routine orders, instructions coming from L.H.Q. in Melbourne, which I think was willing to co-operate with the State Government in seeing that every soldier who wished to could exercise his franchise, instructions to unit commanders that every endeavour should be made to see that soldiers voted, but because of this apathy or this disinclination to do anything savouring of compliance with a political request or direction some officers quietly and very effectively obstructed the efforts of Governments here. Casting my mind back to the time, I recall that before I left Queensland I visited the Principal Electoral Officer to ask him about proxy votes. Mr. Maguire told me, I think in the presence of the hon. member for Warwick, that he had very great difficulty indeed in obtaining the collaboration of officers in various camps round about Brisbane, Redbank and other embarkation camps, when asking for their assistance to get these proxy votes in the hands of soldiers. One would think that as those men were going forth to defend this country and thus giving the best possible evidence of their desire to be good citizens of this country their officers would be the first to ensure that they enjoyed the privileges of democracy and citizenship, and to see that wherever they might go they had the opportunity of casting their votes to determine an important public question.

Mr. Maher: Do you not think it necessarily follows that a military officer who is charged with the defence of the country and with fighting the enemy would regard political work as beneath his dignity? It is not his job. His job is to defeat the enemy.

Mr. DUGGAN: In reply to the hon. member for West Moreton I gather the point of what he says, but I do not think it should be a question of dignity. The officer's general military environment and military training and similar things predispose him towards dealing exclusively with military matters, to withdrawing or disassociating himself from the civilian atmosphere, and to be disinclined to collaborate with civilians. This I think is because of several factors but chiefly because the military people do not get in the various tabloid army communications a full report of strikes and similar things in Australia. Soldiers frequently read of stoppages and dislocation in industry and there frequently develops a resistance towards civilians. For that reason I am sure that where effective steps are not taken to see that these things get due prominence

in Army publications there develops a sort of resentment or antagonism towards civilians' communications, particularly those coming through Parliamentary channels.

The chief point the hon. member for Windsor made this afternoon and one of the chief charges against the Attorney-General and officers of the Electoral Office—

Mr. Pie: I linked it up with confusion.

Mr. DUGGAN: The hon. member said there were thousands of soldiers in the community who were disfranchised. I am not prepared to say how many were disfranchised. There were not many but no matter how many there were, the disfranchisement was not because the Attorney-General failed to make all reasonable provision that these soldiers could vote. In one instance he mentioned that a plane was dispatched with ballot papers. We all know that because of the National Security Regulations the Attorney-General or the Principal Electoral Officer would not know the names of the units in the various places.

To lay a charge that justifies a Royal Commission, one has to show evidence of corruption, breach of faith or gross maladministration, and none of these things was introduced or substantiated in this Chamber this afternoon. We must not be carried away because people make a great deal of noise about minor irregularities of minor officials; we must consider only specified charges supported by substantial and documentary evidence.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 4.4 p.m.
