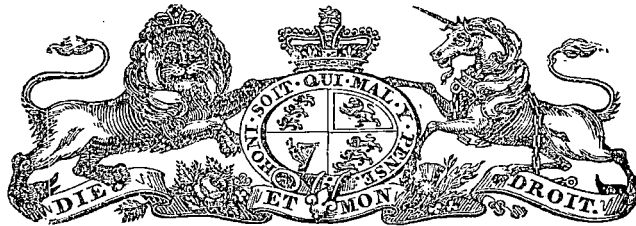


(No. 26.)



1899.

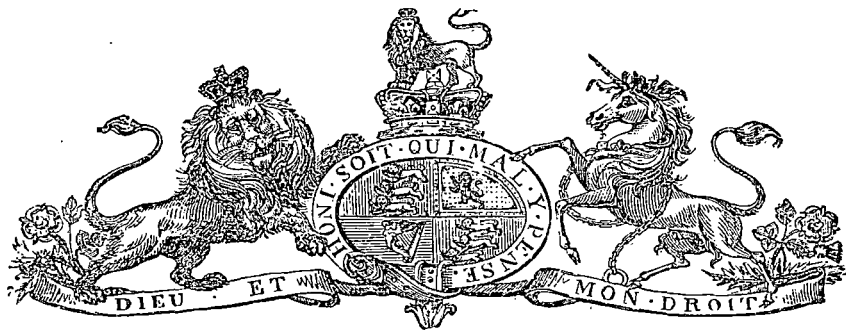
PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

THE ELECTORAL BILL OF 1899:

Brief Explanation of certain Clauses relating to Voting under, by
W. Jethro Brown, M.A., LL.D.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

Cost of printing—£1 2s. 6d.



BRIEF EXPLANATION OF CERTAIN CLAUSES RELATING TO VOTING UNDER THE ELECTORAL BILL OF 1899.

BY

W. JETHRO BROWN, M.A., LL.D.

THE opinion has been expressed that the merits of this Bill, and its practical working, are beyond the comprehension of the voters. The following statement has been prepared with the object of proving that such an opinion is not justified. The statement assumes that the Bill has become law, and that occasion arises for its practical application. It is submitted that if a brief explanation of the Act on the lines suggested was placed within reach of the voter, he would find no difficulty either in employing the system or understanding its merits.

A.—INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS.

1. Vote by writing the numbers 1, 2, 3, and so on, opposite the names of the Candidates printed on the Ballot-paper in accordance with the order of your choice or preference. That is to say :—
WRITE 1 in the square space opposite to the name of the Candidate YOU LIKE BEST.
WRITE 2 in the square opposite to the name of the Candidate YOU LIKE NEXT BEST.
WRITE 3 in the square opposite to the name of the Candidate YOU LIKE NEXT BEST, and so on.
Do not WRITE MORE THAN ONE NUMBER OPPOSITE ANY NAME.
2. VOTE IN THIS WAY for not less than THREE Candidates.
3. The SAME NUMBER must not be written opposite to more than ONE NAME.
4. Do not erase, rub out, or blot out any of the names printed on the Ballot-paper.
5. Do not make any mark or writing other than the Preference Numbers, as already instructed. The placing of any other mark renders your Ballot-paper USELESS.

B.—FURTHER HINTS TO VOTERS.

1. Your vote is only to count for *one* candidate. If the candidate you like most either
(a) Does not need your vote because he has enough votes to elect him without your vote, or
(b) Cannot use your vote because he has so few votes that he cannot be elected, your vote will be transferred to other candidates who have received second or third preferences.
2. It is very desirable that the elector should be most careful to *state his real order of preference*. If he places 1 opposite to the candidate he likes second best, in the hope that the candidate whom he likes best of all will be elected without his assistance, he may be sacrificing the latter's election. This mistake on the part of voters was said to have been made at the last General Election.

C.—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

I. *The General Object of the New System.*

The justification of the new system is that it secures a *fair and true representation of the people*. This could not be effected under the old system of election by majorities in single-member districts. For example, in the election of representatives for the Parliament of New South Wales, in June, 1898, under the old system, the Federal vote outnumbered the Government by over 14,000 votes; yet it secured fewer representatives in the New South Wales Legislature. There was only one way in which such capricious results could be prevented. Single-member electoral districts had to be sacrificed, and in their place have been substituted districts sufficiently large to allow electors to spontaneously group themselves. For the geographical constituency the Act substitutes a constituency of electors whose bond of union is their allegiance to a common representative. To carry out this principle in theoretical perfection would require the whole colony to be treated as one district. It has been thought preferable, however, to begin by a compromise, and to divide the Colony into seven districts.

II. *How the Object has been Attained.*

In order to save the electors the trouble of forming their own constituencies before going to the poll, the Act provides a system known as the single transferable vote. If the number of votes recorded in favour of a candidate are more than are required for his election, his surplus is transferred to other candidates whom the electors have marked 2 or 3. The number of votes required for a candidate's return is called a *quota*. The quota is ascertained by dividing the number of voters in the district by the number of seats for that district. The exact method, in detail, of carrying out this arrangement of transferring votes, is a matter of arithmetic, and the knowledge of it is of no more practical importance to the voter than is a knowledge of the steam engine to the railway traveller.

III. *The Incidental Merits of the New System.*

There are many merits in the new system apart from the one great merit which it possesses of *securing a true and just representation of the people, e.g.*—

1. *Each elector has a very wide choice of candidates.* Instead of having to choose between two or three, he has a choice between probably a dozen. If he does not like one, he may choose another.
2. *The system gives much encouragement to the independence and integrity of Parliamentary candidates.* It is much easier for a candidate to find the electorate whose views he can conscientiously advocate, when he can appeal to a larger number of electors than when he is confined to a single district. Of course it will generally happen that in country districts the candidate will chiefly rely upon his own neighbourhood. But he will be able also to appeal to suffrages of electors who are in any part of his electoral district.
3. *The new system allows for representation of minorities.* The true democratic theory is that every body of electors in a colony is entitled to a representation in proportion to its numbers. But hitherto this has been impossible, because such bodies are often not strong enough in any one district to return a member. In the larger districts constituted by the present Act, it will be possible for such minorities to join their forces and so return a member. There are some who might object to this; but to do so is to rank oneself with those who wish to prevent the true and just representation of the people.