

The Constitutional Amendment (Adult Suffrage) Bill 1894 Years 5-8



Clerk:

First Line

Honourable Members please stand.

Rules

1. Always stand up to speak.
2. Always address your remarks through the Speaker.
3. Address the Speaker as Mr Speaker.
4. Members speak without interruption.
5. The Speaker keeps order.

Bill – First Reading

The Constitutional Amendment (Adult Suffrage) Bill 1894.

A Bill for an Act to grant to all women the right to vote for persons to sit in Parliament.

This Bill will give women the rights previously only granted to men.

Speaker:

Members, please sit down. Parliament is now in session. The rules of the Parliament must be obeyed. Clerk, please read out the rules.

The Constitutional Amendment Adult Suffrage Bill 1894 will now be debated. Clerk please read out the Bill.

I call on the Minister to introduce the Bill

I call on the Opposition Spokesperson

I call on the Member for Sturt

I call on the Member for Wooroora

I call on the Member for Gumeracha

I call on the Member for Noarlunga

I call on the Member for Victoria

I call on the Member for the Northern Territory

I call on the Member for West Torrens

I call on the Member for Flinders

I call on the Member for Yatala

Does anyone else wish to speak on the Bill? Stand if you wish to speak.

I call on

I call on the Minister to close the debate.

A vote on the bill will now be taken. All those in favour say "aye"

All those against say "no"

The ayes/noes have it

A division has been called. Clerk, ring the bells.

Those who support women having the right to vote will move to the right of the chair. Those who do not support it will move to the left of the chair.

The result is # who want to grant women's suffrage, and # who want to refuse suffrage.

The Bill has/has not passed.

In a tie: There being equal votes for and against the Bill I cast my vote for the Bill. The ideas put forward by the Honourable Members have made me decide to vote for the Bill.

Minister

(Member for Mount Barker)

First speech

Mr Speaker, it is now over 10 years since this idea of women voting first came before the House. The answer will one day be yes – women should have the right to vote. So now we need to decide how long it will be delayed. The time is right for this great reform – we should do it now. Women should no longer be denied the right to vote.

Mr Speaker, we have had petitions before us for and against the Bill. The largest was presented by Mr Hawker, which has 11,000 signatures, and is in favour of women having the vote. Most of the petitions on the other side have less signatures. The largest against the vote has 2000 signatures.

Here are the reasons in support of giving women the right to vote:

1. People who have to follow the law should be able choose who makes the law.
2. Parliament should reflect the wishes of the people.
3. Parliament cannot reflect the wishes of the people, when the wishes of women do not have representation.
4. Because a Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, should mean all the people and not just half.
5. Because most of the laws affect women as much as men.

Second speech

Thank you to all Members for your ideas and talking in the debate. I hope you will support this Bill.

Opposition Spokesperson

(Member for North Adelaide)

Mr Speaker, it has been said that women should have the rights to vote so women have their needs met. I do not know what needs haven't been met!

This Bill has been introduced because some Member thought it should be introduced, and not because there is any real demand for it. I have asked other Members of Parliament if their wives are in favour of it, and they said their wives did not want it.

Women's interests are the same as men's, so let men speak for them.

Member for Sturt

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,.

Men speak of women like they are weak! But even though I think I get my own way at home I do not! They are not weak.

Women can do business, and many men cannot. I have known a man die, and his wife take up the business and conduct it better than ever he did.

I have heard some Members of Parliament say that women would get into Parliament on their good looks, but they wouldn't. Even if they did, they would look a lot better than some of the old men here now!

Women should have the right to vote. It is time.

Member for Wooroora

Thank you Mr. Speaker,

Some say it is unfair woman should not have a voice in politics, but I believe she already has a voice. Every man has his soft side, and the women of South Australia are clever enough to find it. I believe in the saying that “man rules the world and that the woman rules the man”. My own experience has shown me that is true. Women influence their husbands in political matters.

If women were to have the vote the peace of our homes would be damaged. There would be political disagreements in families.

The Bill should not pass.

Member for Gumeracha

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

Some people have said women can not leave their home duties to go and vote.

I see women working and helping men in every way— in fields, gardens, factories, vineyards, shops, and post offices.

They can find time to attend teas, shows, concerts, lectures, theatres, and entertainments of all kinds.

Can she not be able to leave home for one hour once every four years to record her voice about the laws under which she is to live and be governed?

Member for Noarlunga

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

We have spent much time talking about women having the right to vote. I support women having the right to vote.

But this Bill also says women should be able to run for Parliament. I will be introducing a change to stop women from sitting in Parliament. The House is not a place for women. It is too soon, and they are too delicate.

Member for Victoria

Mr Speaker, men are much better than women when it comes to reasoning.

Women are influenced by the good looks and manners of men rather than by their true character. That is a danger for elections.

We are told that other places where women vote, the best-dressed men are voted into Parliament. Women cannot be trusted to make a sensible vote.

Few men appreciate a true woman more than I do. But I feel strongly that I am doing women the best service in my power by saying they should not vote. I feel that one day they will be grateful that I am saying no.

Member for Northern Territory

Mr Speaker, the best women are the best mothers and wives. Politics will ruin their homes. It is a privilege to run a house.

Women are already represented by their husbands.

If the Bill becomes law that every Member who assisted in passing it will in ten years' time will bitterly regret their actions.

Member for West Torrens

Mr Speaker, it has been said that if we give women a vote it would lead to fights and destroy homes. That is about one of the weakest arguments that could be used against the Bill!

I would remind members the Queen of England! We hear nothing of the political duties of the Queen ruining Her Majesty's home, and yet she presides over the greatest Empire the world has ever seen.

Surely if a woman is able to do those duties without any problem, it is not too much to say that the women of South Australia could go and vote once every four years.

Member for Flinders

Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of anything more mean than making women follow all laws that men have made, and give her no right to have a say about them.

It is offensive to women's intelligence to say that they cannot both do household duties and vote. Women have proved themselves equal to men in many ways. In fact, at home they are even better than men.

Women will make their mark. Let them have the right to vote and run for Parliament.

Member for Yatala

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

For the sake of our sons and daughters –

For the sake of the world –

For the sake of justice and right –

Let us remove this barrier for women.

Let's ask for forgiveness that it wasn't until 1894 that we considered putting women in their true and right position.