the election, or even a few weeks or any short time prior to the
election, politicians will use the privilege of paying for the
purposes of injuring voting parties. In other words, parties or
candidates for office will pay the poll tax of a great number of
voters upon condition, express or implied, that the votes are to be
cast for their party or for themselves. Wherever a poll-tax pro-
vision has existed without some limitation as to the time at which
it shall be paid prior to the election that has been the case.
Mr. PARKER of New Jersey. May I ask the gentleman a ques-
tion?
Mr. WILLIAMS of Mississippi. The provision of this bill is
that the poll tax shall be paid "prior to registration," and the
present Hawaiian law fixes the registration about four months
prior to the election. But of course that law might be changed at
any moment. Moreover, four months is not a long enough time.
If you fix it at nine months—a period sufficiently short—then it
will be certain that the poll tax will not be paid by any
voter, for the simple reason that the man who is willing to give
his vote in consideration of payment of his poll tax is not a man
that can be trusted for nine months. He may be bought by the
voter after that.
We have a provision like that in Mississippi—that is, for the
payment of the poll tax of the previous year—and the consequence is
that nobody has ever paid the poll tax of anybody else with
the hope of buying a vote, or indeed for any purpose.
Mr. PARKER of New Jersey. What is the election to be held?
How would you make it applicable to elections in the current
year?
Mr. WILLIAMS of Mississippi. It is the poll tax due nine
months before. It makes the poll tax due nine months before
the regular election an opportunity for the voter, with the sole con-
dition that he shall have paid his poll tax. It was thought not
right that a man who had a tax assessed against him, and who
should offer to pay it at any time before the close of the registra-
tion, should be disfranchised. I suggest to the gentleman from
Mississippi that in the recollection of his vote that he is going to
vote the current year are not assessed nine months previous to the
election. Our taxes are assessed in May, for instance.
Mr. WILLIAMS of Mississippi. My amendment does not make
the poll tax for the current year the test for his. He shall pay the
poll tax in the months before the election, and that would necessarily be
the poll tax of the previous year.
Mr. KNOX. Then the other language in the section will have
to be stricken out, as it refers to the payment of the poll tax for
the current year. It reads the months before the election, and that
would necessarily be the poll tax of the previous year.
Mr. WILLIAMS of Mississippi. Well, Mr. Chairman, I wish
to modify my amendment. I will strike out the word "current," in line 2, page 74, and substitute the word "previous." I did not notice the word "current" in the section. That will cure the trouble.
Mr. KNOX. Now, Mr. Chairman, I call for a vote.
Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Chairman, I wish to be recognized on
the amendment. I think this is an important amendment and one
that should be passed. I objected to the provisions which have
virtually making a constitution for Hawaii as long as it remains
under Territorial form of government, unless altered by Congress.
I think it should be the effort of the Congress of the United States,
every time it is possible to do so, to raise the citizenship of this
country and bring it up to the level of the people who are voting
it in Hawaii, New York, or Alabama. I think that only those
persons should be entitled to vote who have shown themselves
qualified to exercise the right of citizenship; and I believe that
when a man is unable or unwilling to pay $1 to support the
government in his jurisdiction, he is not qualified to prop-
perly exercise the elective franchise.
But you do not throw that protection around the citizens who
are entitled to the ballot if you merely put it up as a premium for
some one to come in and purchase their votes by paying their reg-
istration fee. I shall place in this way the whole registration
system as it is paid by the citizen because he appreciates the
value and privileges of the American citizen, the privilege of vot-
ing as an American citizen, the privilege of being one of the gov-
erning body of his country. I say that if you limit this, if you
merely put it before registration, the Hawaiian citizens may some
day change the time of registration down to a week before
the election, when those who have money will be able to pay the
register fees and have their names put up to vote.
Now, in this constitution (for it is practically a constitution we are
about to adopt for Hawaii) I say we ought to protect the elec-
tive franchise to that extent and adopt the amendment offered by
the gentleman from Mississippi, and at least put it nine months
in advance to make it certain that a vote there will be in
the election.
The argument which my friend from Massachusetts makes
that the voter may be sick on that day or prevented by some
reason from paying his registration nine months in advance, has
no force, for the same rule may apply to four months or a week in
advance. Not being obliged to pay it on any previous day, it
has full opportunity. But I say, as the matter stands now, you
have not properly guarded the bill against the corruption of
the voter, and you should do it when you have the opportunity.
Mr. GROSVENOR. Mr. Chairman, if I had my way about this,
I would strike it out. But there is no greater outrage upon the institutions of the American peo-
ple than to say that a man unable, in the language of the gentle-
man from Alabama, to pay a dollar shall not be permitted to vote
for the men who are to be his governors during the succeeding
year. Though, on a small scale, it still, in fact, is a direct money power operating against the voter if he happens to be a poor man. [Applause.] But, Mr. Chairman, in the wisdom of this committee, this bill has been so framed that the individual who desires to vote must pay this tax upon the first official
notice to him or he can not vote. Let us see how this machinery works in comparison with that.
The voter comes to the proper place to register. He wants to
vote—that is an indication of it. Then it is suggested to him,
you must pay this tax. Perhaps the man who has never paid the
tax for the first time—it comes to his knowledge, or at least to his
recollection, that he owes a dollar to the State or to the Govern-
ment. Now, is it not enough if he pays that dollar then and there,
in order to avail himself of his right to vote? Is this a little
thing, Mr. Chairman? Is it more than a thousand scattering bribed votes than a condition where there are
no votes and the election is made by a caucus.
Now, Mr. Chairman, what is the proposition here? How many
of us remember to pay promptly on the day that they fall due all
the little obligations that we owe to society and the State, even to
paying our poll tax? Where would I stand in that matter? I
ought rather have a thousand scattering bribed votes than a condition where there are
no votes and the election is made by a caucus.
I say there ought to be no obstacles thrown in the way of the
voter. There ought to be no deliberate purpose here to entangle
and defeat the votes of this great body of men. I am willing to
vote for the proposition as the committee has reported it, to re-
quire the payment of the registration tax. I do not believe in
it; it would burden many people. But certainly if people discharge
their duty in paying this tax at a time as far in advance of the
election as when the registration is taken, that surely ought to be
sufficient. We ought not to permit such an amendment as this
to go into the hands of the people.
Mr. LINNEY. I would like to occupy a minute or two.
Mr. KNOX. I trust the gentleman will remember that we are
to vote at 4 o'clock.
The CHAIRMAN. Debate is exhausted on this amendment.
Mr. LINNEY. I call for a vote. The CHAIRMAN. That would not be
in order.
Mr. LINNEY. I hope the gentleman from Massachusetts will
allow me two minutes.
Mr. KNOX. Very well; I yield the gentleman two minutes.
Mr. LINNEY. Mr. Chairman, I desire to oppose this amend-
ment. I believe in manhood suffrage. I believe that crime should
disqualify a citizen from the exercise of the right of vote, but mis-
fortune or even negligence should not do so. If I read history
afoot, Sherman, one of the greatest characters in all history, had
his blanketed sold, his horse sold, his death, from off the cot on
which he lay, for a tax. Yes, Sheridan, of whom it has been said:
Nature made but one such man,
And broke the die in molding Sheridan.
The day before yesterday I had the honor of addressing an audi-
cence of 2,000 people in the State of North Carolina upon the pro-
position to put in our constitution a provision somewhat like this.
And I put to the sheriff the question, "How many white men in
Moore County (one of the richest counties in the State) have not
paid their poll tax up to this date?" He replied, "Seven hundred.
Mr. KLUTZ. I ask the gentleman whether that provision in