Anno tertio

Georgii III. Regis.

CAP. XV.

An Act to prevent Occaſional Freemen from Voting at Elections of Members to ſerve in Parliament for Cities and Boroughs.



WHEREAS great Abuſes have been committed in making Freemen of Corporations, in order to influence Elections of Members to ſerve in Parliament, to the great Infringement of the Rights of Freemen of ſuch Corporations, and of the Freedom of Elections: To prevent ſuch Practices for the future; be it enacted by the King's moſt Excellent Majeſty, by and with the Advice and Conſent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Preamble.

poral, and Commons, in Parliament assembled, and by Authority of the same, That from and after the First Day of May, One thousand seven hundred and sixty three, no Person whatsoever claiming as a Freeman to vote at any Election of Members to serve in Parliament for any City, Town, Port, or Borough, in England, Wales, and the Town of Berwick upon Tweed, where such Voter's Right of voting is as a Freeman only, shall be admitted to give his Vote at such Election, unless such Person shall have been admitted to the Freedom of such City, Town, Port, or Borough, Twelve Calendar Months before the First Day of such Election: And if any Person shall presume to give his Vote as a Freeman at any Election of Members to serve in Parliament, contrary to the true Intent and Meaning of this Act, he shall, for every such Offence, forfeit and pay the Sum of One hundred Pounds to him, her, or them, who shall inform and sue for the same; and the Vote given by such Person shall be void and of no Effect.

None to vote as Freemen, at Elections of Members, but such as have been admitted to their Freedom 12 Months before such Election,

on Penalty of 100 *l.*

Provided always, That nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to any Person intitled to his Freedom by Birth, Marriage, or Servitude, according to the Custom or Usage of such City, Town, Port, or Borough.

Persons intitled to their Freedom, by Birth, Marriage, or Servitude, excepted.

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That if any Mayor, Bailiff, Sheriff, Town Clerk, or other Officer of any Corporation, or other Person whatsoever, shall wilfully and fraudulently antedate, or cause to be antedated, any Admission of any Freeman, such Mayor, Bailiff, Sheriff, Town Clerk, Officer, or other Person, shall, for every such Offence, forfeit and pay the Sum of Five hundred Pounds to him, her, or them, who shall inform and sue for the same.

Penalty of antedating the Admission of any Freeman, 500 *l.*

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the Mayor, Bailiff, Sheriff, Town Clerk, or other Officer of any Corporation, having the Custody of, or Power over, the Records of the same, shall, upon the Demand of any Candidate, or his Agent, or any Two Freemen, on the Payment of One Shilling,

The Books and Papers of Admission of Freemen to be open to Inspection, upon Demand of a Candidate, his Agent, or 2 Freemen, upon Payment of 1 *s.*

permit such Candidate, Agent, or Freemen, between the Hours of Nine in the Morning and Three in the Afternoon, at any Time before, and within One Month after, any such Election as aforesaid, to inspect the Books and Papers wherein the Admission of Freemen shall be entered; and to have Copies or Minutes of the Admission of so many Freemen as such Candidate, Agent, or Freemen, shall think fit, upon paying to such Mayor, Bailiff, Sheriff, Town Clerk, or other Officer, a reasonable Charge for writing the same; and such Books and Papers shall, if demanded by such Candidate, Agent, or Freemen, be produced by such Mayor, Bailiff, Sheriff, Town Clerk, or other Officer, at every Election, and be referred to, in case any Dispute shall arise touching the Right of any Person to give his Vote thereat: And if such Mayor, Bailiff, Sheriff, Town Clerk, or other Officer, shall refuse or deny such Candidate, Agent, or Freemen, the Inspection of such Books and Papers, or to have Copies or Minutes thereof, or shall refuse or neglect to produce such Books and Papers at any Election, if demanded and paid for in the Manner herein before set forth, such Mayor, Bailiff, Sheriff, Town Clerk, or other Officer, shall, for every such Offence, forfeit and pay the Sum of One hundred Pounds to him, her, or them, who shall inform and sue for the same.

and Copies and Minutes of the Admissions to be given, paying reasonably for writing the same;

and the Books, &c. to be produced, if demanded, at every Election,

on Penalty of 100 *l.*

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That all Forfeitures or Penalties laid or imposed by this Act, shall be recovered, with Full Costs of Suit, by Action of Debt, Bill, Plaint, or Information, in any of His Majesty's Courts of Record at Westminster; wherein no Essoin, Protection, Wager of Law, or more than One Imparlance, shall be allowed.

The Penalties may be recovered, with Full Costs of Suit;

Provided always, and it is hereby further enacted and declared by the Authority aforesaid, That no Person shall be liable to any Forfeiture or Penalty by this Act laid or imposed, unless Prosecution be commenced within One Year after such Forfeiture or Penalty shall be incurred.

provided the Prosecution becommenced within a Year.

This Act to be openly read by the Returning Officer, at all Elections by Freemen, immediately after Act 2 *Geo.* II.

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the Returning Officer shall read, or cause to be read, openly, this Act, at the Time of Election of Members to serve in Parliament for Cities, Towns, Ports, or Boroughs, where the Right of Election is in the Whole, or in Part, in Freemen as aforesaid, immediately after the Reading of the Act passed in the Second Year of His late Majesty's Reign, intituled, An Act for the more effectual preventing Bribery and Corruption in the Elections of Members to serve in Parliament.

This Act not to extend to *London* or *Norwich*.

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That nothing in this Act shall extend, or be construed to extend, to the Cities of London or Norwich.

FINIS.