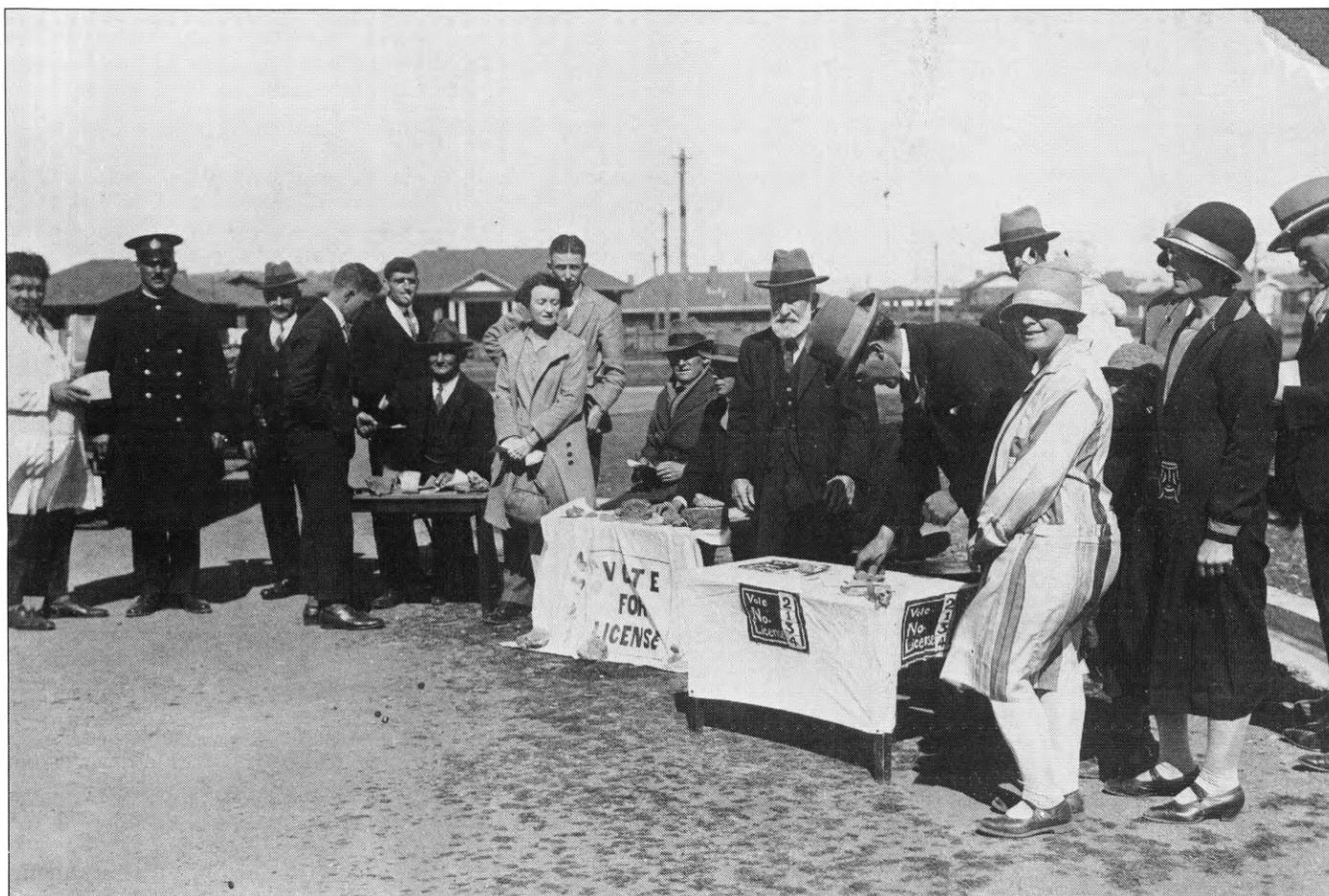


CANBERRA 'DRY'



FROM its beginnings, Canberra was 'dry'. Alcohol-wise, it was Drouughtsville. Pressure for some kind of liquor licensing built up, until in 1928 it was decided to hold a referendum to ask the voters if they wanted local liquor sales rather than making the journey to nearby Queanbeyan in New South Wales to quench their thirsts.

The campaign ran hot, with King O'Malley, the Minister responsible for the Federal Territory, opposing any change. The voters were given three choices: No sales, sales by a government authority, or private licensing.

On 1 September 1928, a cold, windy day as this picture shows, they turned out for what is said to be Canberra's first

poll. They voted strongly for private licensing.

O'Malley shifted his ground but slightly. Liquor sales began in December 1928, but only in the private hotels run by the Federal Capital Commission, and in cafes which were to serve both men and women — pretty revolutionary for those days. The cafe experiment was a failure, but Canberra went on to be the first capital city to make alcohol available 24 hours a day — legally.

The policeman in the picture is believed to be Constable W Tandy. We assume that feelings ran so high that a police presence was considered prudent. The bearded bloke is King O'Malley. The tall chap behind is Ernest Hobbs, and he

carries his three-months-old daughter, June.

The camera looks south-east from the Ainslie Public School, built a year earlier, and now the Questacon science centre. Mrs Irene Gifford supplied the photo (her father was Ernest Hobbs) and Sergeant Charles Griffith passed it to *Platypus*. Canberra and District Historical Society Inc. did the research.

This regular feature of *Platypus* is attracting loads of attention from readers. If you have an anecdote you'd like to tell your friends, *Platypus* might be the place to do it. Perhaps you have a question you've always wanted answered. Write to the Editor and ask. Some reader is sure to know the answer.