

## **Section: Charles Bradlaugh**

Context: The Select Committee began deliberating on 1 June 1880, when it considered a paper put in by Sir Thomas Erskine May, the Clerk of the House. Sir Thomas found several precedents for Members disabled to sit for refusing to take the Oath, together with Quaker MP Joseph Pease who was permitted to affirm, and Jewish MPs Baron Lionel de Rothschild and David Salomons who were eventually allowed to take the Oath while omitting the words "on the true faith of a Christian." On the following day, Erskine May and Bradlaugh himself were questioned by the Committee, with Bradlaugh arguing that, should the Committee decide he had no right to affirm, he would take the oath and regard it as binding on his conscience. When the Committee decided its report, it agreed by one vote an amendment declaring that the House could "and, in the opinion of your Committee, ought to" prevent Bradlaugh taking the Oath. It also added (by 12 votes to 9) that it would be possible for an action in the High Court of Justice to test whether an affirmation was genuinely legal, and therefore recommended that if Bradlaugh sought to affirm, he should be allowed to do so in order that such an action be brought to clarify the law. The second Select Committee had effectively reversed the outcome of the first. When it was known that this was the likely outcome of the Select Committee, Bradlaugh's fellow Northampton MP Henry Labouchere initiated a debate on a motion to allow Bradlaugh to affirm. Sir Hardinge Giffard moved an amendment that Bradlaugh be not permitted to take either the Oath or make an affirmation. After two days of debate, Giffard's amendment was carried by 275 to 230, a defeat which surprised Gladstone. The majority comprised 210 Conservatives, 34 Liberals and 31 Irish Home Rulers; supporting Bradlaugh were 218 Liberals, 10 Home Rulers and 2 Conservatives. On the next day, Bradlaugh came to the Table claiming to take the Oath; in consequence of the previous night's vote the Speaker ordered him to withdraw. Bradlaugh was permitted to address the House from behind the Bar (which was technically outside the Chamber), and treated the occasion as his maiden speech. He based his argument on law, contending that he was not legally disqualified, and asking "as one man against six hundred" for the same justice he would receive in the Courts. Although well received, the speech was too late to reverse the decision, and Henry Labouchere was forced to withdraw a motion to rescind it. CANNOTANSWER

STUDENT: **What is the Second Select Committee?**

TEACHER: ↗ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↗ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↗ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↗ CANNOTANSWER

STUDENT: **What was his involvement in the Second Select Committee?**

TEACHER: ⇨ Erskine May and Bradlaugh himself were questioned by the Committee,

TEACHERX: ⇨ Erskine May and Bradlaugh himself were questioned by the Committee, with Bradlaugh arguing that, should the Committee decide he had no right to affirm,

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STUDENT: **What were they questioned about?**

TEACHER: ⇨ Members disabled to sit for refusing to take the Oath,

TEACHERX: ⇨ a paper put in by Sir Thomas Erskine May, the Clerk of the House. Sir Thomas found several precedents for Members disabled to sit for refusing to take the Oath,

TEACHERX: ⇨ Bradlaugh arguing that, should the Committee decide he had no right to affirm, he would take the oath and regard it as binding on his conscience.

TEACHERX: ⇨ refusing to take the Oath,

TEACHERX: ⇨ Members disabled to sit for refusing to take the Oath,

STUDENT: **What oath did they refuse to take?**

TEACHER: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

STUDENT: **Did he consider himself to be a Christian?**

TEACHER: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

STUDENT: **What happened after the questioning?**

TEACHER: ↩ the House could "and, in the opinion of your Committee, ought to" prevent Bradlaugh taking the Oath.

TEACHERX: ↩ report, it agreed by one vote an amendment declaring that the House could "and, in the opinion of your Committee, ought to" prevent Bradlaugh taking the Oath.

TEACHERX: ↩ The second Select Committee had effectively reversed the outcome of the first.

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TEACHERX: ↩ the House could "and, in the opinion of your Committee, ought to" prevent Bradlaugh taking the Oath.

STUDENT: **Was it the government questioning him?**

TEACHER: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

TEACHERX: ↩ CANNOTANSWER

STUDENT: **What was the final vote count?**

TEACHER: ↩ supporting Bradlaugh were 218 Liberals, 10 Home Rulers and 2 Conservatives.

TEACHERX: ↩ supporting Bradlaugh were 218 Liberals, 10 Home Rulers and 2 Conservatives.

TEACHERX: ↩ 12 votes to 9) that it would be possible for an action in the High Court of Justice to test whether an affirmation was genuinely legal,

TEACHERX: ↩ 275 to 230,

TEACHERX: ↩ supporting Bradlaugh were 218 Liberals, 10 Home Rulers and 2 Conservatives.