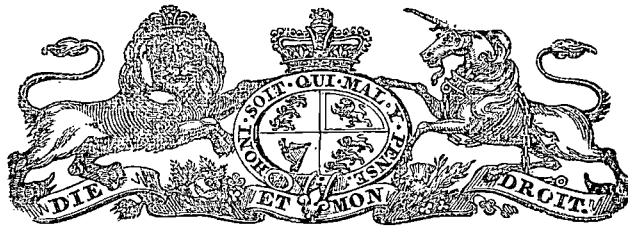


(No. 81.)



1890.

---

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

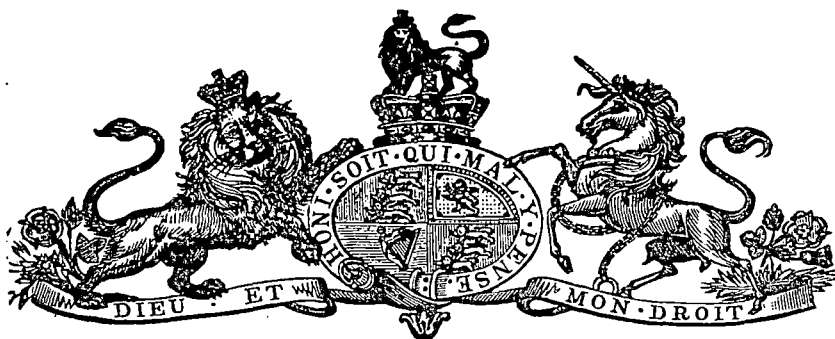
---

OUT-DOOR RELIEF, CITY OF HOBART AND  
SUBURBS :

REPORT FOR HALF-YEAR ENDED 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1890, BY  
ADMINISTRATOR OF CHARITABLE GRANTS.

---

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



*Charitable Grants Department, 18th July, 1890.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit the following Report in connection with the distribution of outdoor relief in the City of Hobart and Suburbs.

At the beginning of the year, when the relief of the poor on behalf of the Government was withdrawn from the Executive Committee of the Benevolent Society, the duty, by your instructions, devolved upon me.

The then Inquiring Officer, as directed by you, reported himself to me on Saturday, the 28th December, 1889, and was instructed to prepare by Monday the requisitions for such supplies as would be required for issue the following week. This Officer informed me that a portion of the rations for the week ending Friday, 3rd January, would be issued on the usual day, Tuesday, the 31st December, and when asked about the balance, said he had no doubt the Committee would complete the issue on the Friday, but he would inquire and report. Instead of doing so, however, he forwarded an application for leave of absence on the 31st, accompanied by a medical certificate. Thereupon I sent Mr. Judge, the Inspecting Officer under the Boarding-out System, to the Office of the Executive Committee of the Benevolent Society, and, on the 2nd January, he reported as follows:—

“I have the honor to report for your information that, according to your instructions I called at the Office of the Benevolent Society on the 31st ultimo, and having asked Mr. Witt if the Society would be prepared to complete on the following Friday the issue of rations which they had commenced on that day, he immediately consulted the Rev. Mr. Simmons, who was in the Office, and returned to me with the answer that they would let me know on Thursday morning next. I called again to-day, and, as Mr. Simmons and Mr. Seabrook were in the Office, I was ushered in there, and repeated my question as to whether it was their intention to complete the issue to-morrow, but was told by the Chairman that they would do nothing of the kind, and Mr. Seabrook joined in by saying they would have nothing to do with it after the 31st December, and that was then past. I endeavoured to point out what inconvenience and confusion this decision of theirs would cause, as when making out monthly returns one party would be responsible for a portion of the bread in each ration and the other for the remaining portion of the bread as well as the groceries, and that by their then decision we would be taken short, and the poor people could not have their allowances next day; but the reply I received was, ‘We can’t help that,’ and ‘the Government should have been prepared.’ I then asked if the Society would permit their Office to be used for the next day’s issue, but was told by the Chairman that they would not lend their Office for any purpose, and that they would not have any further discussion on the matter.”

Under the above circumstances I had to make the best arrangement I could; and I am glad to be in a position to state that, notwithstanding the adverse circumstances under which I commenced the work, I was enabled to comply with your instructions “to secure the due continuance of the relief to the recipients enjoying the same at the present time,” without much inconvenience to them.

The action of the Committee in refusing to complete the issue, which in all fairness to the Government and to the recipients I think they were bound to do, may have been caused by the sudden collapse of the Inquiring Officer, rendering them unable with their own staff to do the work; and I would prefer so to think: but I fear, from the circumstances surrounding the refusal, the desire to embarrass me, and thereby to bring odium upon the Government, had not a little to do with the unsympathetic and ungenerous attitude assumed by the Committee.

The number of cases on the books on the 1st January, when the transfer took place, was 139; and the expenditure per month amounted to £76 12s. 6d., viz.—Cash, £16 7s. 9d.; Rations, £60 4s. 9d.; in addition to which, 33 other cases, which up to that time had been relieved out of the funds of the Benevolent Society, were struck off the books of the Society and became a charge upon the Government, making a total of 172. Two of these 33 cases, however, disappeared from the list—one of the recipients being in Gaol, and no application for assistance having been made by the other. The additional cost thus imposed upon the Government amounted to £12 13s. 3d. for the month—viz., Cash, £1 17s. 6d.; Rations, £10 15s. 9d., making the total expenditure for January £89 5s. 9d.—viz., Cash, £18 5s. 3d.; Rations at contract prices, £71 0s. 6d.—for 170 cases.

The new Inquiring Officer, Mr. Kelly, has exhibited energy and tact in the discharge of his duties, and so far I have every reason to be satisfied with his appointment. He has been well instructed in his work by Mr. Judge, of whose services in the emergency that so unexpectedly arose I cannot speak too highly.

The whole of these cases have been most carefully inquired into, and during the time occupied in the investigation the relief authorised by the Executive Committee was continued; but it was soon discovered that in several instances aid was not needed, and should have been withdrawn long ago, and in others that reductions in the amount of relief afforded should also have been made some time before. It was also reported to me by the Inquiring Officer as follows:—"During my inquiries into the cases receiving out-door relief I came across many who had never received an official visit from any one. It appears they were asked a few questions in front of the counter, and further particulars were obtained from some of the other recipients. There are numerous cases in which the recipients had not been called upon for the last eighteen months to two years. This omission appears to have given some of them the opportunity to remain on the books, and boast of it after their circumstances had improved."

Being totally unprepared for a revelation so opposed to the perfection persistently claimed for the system of distributing relief practised by the Executive Committee, I questioned the Inquiring Officer closely on the subject, and he assured me it was as stated. How this is to be reconciled with the assertions so frequently made with regard to the superiority of the oversight exercised by the Committee it is not for me to say.

From the papers connected with the cases little information could be obtained beyond the fact that the allowances had been periodically renewed, nor was there anything to show that the circumstances of the recipients had been enquired into after the first order for relief had been given; and this would appear to coincide with the statements of some of the persons recently visited, that they "had never received an official visit from any one." In some cases changes had certainly been made, but the papers rarely disclosed the grounds upon which they had been ordered. Indeed, the documents received from the Executive Committee were in such a condition as to convey the impression that the work had been performed in the most perfunctory manner, and entailed upon the officers of this Department an amount of labour that would have been altogether unnecessary if the duty had been previously discharged in anything like the manner it should have been.

During the six months that have elapsed since the transfer 12 cases have been added to the number already reported, and 41 have been removed from the list, leaving 141 on the 30th June.

The expenditure for June amounted to £62 12s.—viz., Cash, £13 5s. 6d., Rations, £49 6s. 6d., or £26 13s. 9d. less than in January, although the contract prices of tea and sugar were somewhat higher in the middle than at the beginning of the year.

The Executive Committee having declined to continue the issue of fuel to persons receiving assistance from the Government, it became necessary to obtain authority for the expenditure of a special sum, estimated at £30, for that purpose; and wood and coal have accordingly been given to such of the poor people as were unable to supply their own wants.

In some few cases fuel was the only assistance required, and all have expressed their thanks to the Government for their kind consideration in this respect.

Whether the subscribers to the Fuel Account of the Benevolent Society are aware of the distinction that has been made by the Executive Committee I cannot of course say; but I doubt very much if the facts were made known to them that they would endorse the action of the Committee in punishing the unfortunate poor solely on the ground that they were the recipients of Government aid.

The expenditure in cash and rations for the six months ended 30th June amounted to £447 5s. 8d.—viz., Cash, £92 10s. 6d., Rations, £354 15s. 2d., but included therein is the sum of £11 17s. 4d. incurred in January in consequence of a misunderstanding on the part of Messrs. R. Walker and Co., who informed me they were the contractors for the year. It was afterwards

discovered, but too late to repair the mistake, for the goods had been delivered and issued, that supplies to this Department were not included in their contract. But for this, the expenditure for the above-named period would have been £435 8s. 4d.—viz., Cash, £92 10s. 6d., Rations, at contract prices, £342 17s. 10d.

The cost of the wood and coal issued for the winter months was £29 11s., making the total expenditure £476 16s. 8d.

Unless extraordinary demands are made upon the department during the next six months, I have reason to believe that the reduction in the number of cases, and the changes that have been made in the scales and issues of rations, will so decrease the expenditure as to enable the work to be done for the year, salaries and wages included, for the sum of £1000.

Before concluding, I desire to avail myself of this, the sole opportunity I have had, of referring to the oft repeated assertion that it is impossible for the duty of relieving the poor to be satisfactorily discharged by a department under the Government. An answer thereto, I think, will be found in this report, in which it has been shown what can be effected by systematic and conscientious work, followed up by unceasing vigilance, inquiry, and supervision. Again, if the Government cannot discharge this duty, how comes it that so large a saving has been made in the expenditure for out-door relief throughout the Colony during the past few years, and under far more difficult circumstances than those connected with the city, where the recipients are, or rather should be, under the almost daily observation of the officers of the department?

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

J. O'BOYLE,

*Administrator Charitable Grants.*

*The Honorable the Chief Secretary.*