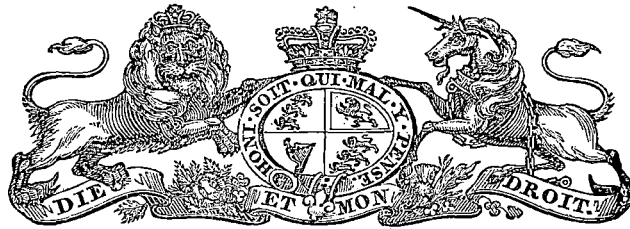


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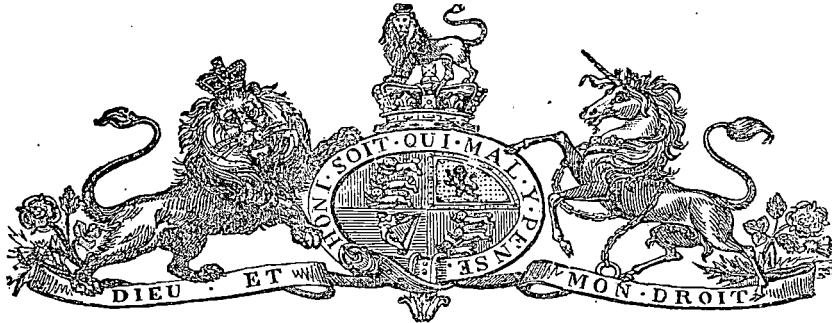
1886.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

CALIFORNIAN THISTLE ACT:

REPORT FOR 1885.

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



CALIFORNIAN THISTLE ACT.

REPORT by Chief Inspector.

Office of Inspector of Sheep, Hobart, 1st July, 1886.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit the following Report upon the working of "The Californian Thistle Act" during the past year.

From the representations made in my last Report upon the prevalence of this weed in Southern Tasmania, and its alarmingly rapid extension over our most valuable agricultural lands, I considered it desirable to apply for further inspecting power, which was granted, to perform duties under the Act, and to see that its provisions were properly enforced.

One of the most serious difficulties this Department has to contend against is the action taken by one of the Municipalities with reference to fees. I have communicated with the authorities in that district, pointing out the inconvenience to the Inspector by being compelled to pay fees out of his private purse for costs of informations laid under the Act, and have intimated that great facilities would result to the working of the Act if the fees were allowed to stand over until the cases are heard; I further stated that this Department would be responsible for any liability so incurred. The authorities did not accede to the request. In view of these facts, I have to suggest that an amendment be made in "The Californian Thistle Act, 1883," 47 Vict. No. 17, with a clause inserted equivalent to Section 11 of "The Education Act, 1885," 49 Vict. No. 15, so that the difficulty may be overcome.

I would suggest that a minimum penalty of Two Pounds be fixed by law when a second offence under this Act is committed and verdict given for the plaintiff, and Three Pounds for the third offence. I feel satisfied from past experience that no permanent good will result as the Act at present stands; occupiers of land having Californian Thistles upon their properties maintaining that it is far more to their pecuniary advantage to pay one, two, or even three such fines as are at present inflicted at the different Police Courts than to cut their thistles to prevent them blossoming.

Property owners must be, and are, blind to their own interests in demanding such exorbitant rents for infested agricultural land. It is unreasonable and impossible to expect that a property so leased will have justice done to it. Patches of Californian thistles are ploughed through yearly, allowed to bloom, seed, and eventually to take complete possession of the cultivated portion of the estate, as is the case in the Clarence District; little or no care is taken by the tenant, who must pay rent, and cannot afford, nor does he attempt, to eradicate the thistles so long as he keeps out of the Police Court and within the reading of the Act. I should recommend owners of agricultural properties to assist the tenant by giving him a bonus in the shape of reduced rent for all patches of thistles destroyed, and thus encourage him to improve and enhance the value of the estate.

It only required a repetition of the energy and perseverance displayed by Mr. Joseph Barwick, of the Tea Tree, who has eradicated upwards of 9 acres, and Mr. Charles Mathews, who has destroyed 34 patches of thistles in 5 years. Mr. Earle has also exterminated about 5 acres of

Californian thistles. He informs me that he purchased the ground he now occupies, containing about 7 acres, 4 years since, which at that time was literally one mass of thistles, and has now the satisfaction of knowing he has exterminated this weed by constantly keeping the ground moving. He made the work reproductive, for during the operation the land produced vegetables and strawberries in abundance during the season; the ground is now planted out as an orchard. This work has been accomplished in 3 years. Mr. Earle tells me the work of extermination cost him £7 per acre, but now, with his increased experience, he thinks he could undertake to destroy these thistles from any land for half that sum. By advertisement he offered to place the knowledge he has gained by long experience and his services at the disposal of those holders of Californian thistle land who are desirous of being rid of this weed, and undertakes the work of extermination at a price per acre to be agreed upon—the terms being, No cure, no pay.

Mr. Tasman Morrisby entered into an arrangement with Mr. Earle to destroy 62 rods of thistles, with the pleasing result that after two seasons' work the few thistles that remained were small, but, with one more season's work, these few stragglers totally disappeared. Last season the ground was cropped—not one thistle made its appearance. After this practical and satisfactory test, Mr. Morrisby laid himself out to eradicate a large area he had in a paddock of six acres, and by constant attention, and working the land thoroughly and systematically, he had the satisfaction of seeing the land cleared in two seasons. One paddock of Mr. Morrisby's that has been laid down in grass for 13 years still has these thistles growing, but they are spindly, showing that grassing the land weakens the thistle but will not eradicate it. A few other practical gentlemen have eradicated large areas; these gentlemen assert, without fear of contradiction, that what they have done others can do by persistently hoeing the infested land once a week, thus destroying the lungs of the plant. This method will, in most cases, destroy the weed in one, and certainly in two seasons.

I am also of opinion that in the districts of Green Ponds, Spring Bay, Oatlands, Glamorgan, Hamilton, Bothwell, and in all districts in the north of the Island where the Californian thistle has not obtained complete possession, the Government should insist on the extirpation of this objectionable plant, by compelling owners upon whose property it exists to start with systematically hoeing the thistle patches once a week during the season, commencing when the thistle first appears in the spring. The owner should be allowed two seasons to destroy the pest on all land in the above-mentioned districts; and if after that period these thistles are still found to exist, the owner shall be liable to proceedings being instituted against him, and failing to prove to the satisfaction of the Justices that he has taken proper means to eradicate the thistle, a penalty, to be mentioned in the Act, shall be inflicted; a licence shall then be issued, upon application and payment of a certain fee, to extend the time for eradication for another season.

Another very important matter is the selection of grain for seed, and careful inspection of hay before purchasing. The carelessness with which seed grain was formerly purchased from thistle-infested land has been the primary cause of the rapid extension of the pest. It is also a known fact that grain is cut for hay during the time thistles are in bloom and in seed, and has, in the past, been sold without restriction in the Hobart market. The destructive effect of this is now evident in the Huon district by following the timber-splitter's track to the stump where his horse and cattle have been fed,—you will see the Californian thistle now growing most luxuriantly. If agriculturists and consumers were more particular in purchasing their grain for seed and hay for horse feed, and not invest in produce grown upon farms whereon Californian thistles are known to exist, it would have the effect, in a great measure, of decreasing the pest, and compel farmers in districts such as Glenorchy, Clarence, and Brighton to cut all thistles out of growing crops.

In consequence of the large area of thistles now known in the Huon district, I must ask for another Inspector to be appointed. Up to the present this locality was considered fairly free from the pest, but, from the isolated position of this district, an Inspector is required solely to enforce the carrying out of the law in that portion of the Island.

The remuneration now provided is not adequate to the work performed. It is impossible for an Inspector to travel and do the work required unless he is paid in proportion. I therefore recommend that the rate of salary be increased by 3s. per diem. The rate now sanctioned, viz., 12s. per diem working days, is not sufficient to meet the Inspector's outlay. The duties frequently compel their absence from home at nights; they also have to provide their own horses, shoeing, and forage.

I have to express my entire satisfaction at the able way the present gentlemen have carried out their extremely unpleasant and difficult duties connected with this Act. There has been considerable agitation as to the way in which the Inspectors appointed to carry out the law have performed their duties, and complaints have been made. These I have required to be reduced to writing, with the view of enabling the Inspector to furnish their remarks to the charge preferred against them. The explanations made in all cases satisfactorily explain their actions, and prove they have not exceeded their duties, as has been fully borne out by the verdicts recorded at the various Police Courts.

I have the honor to draw your attention to the convictions and fines under "The Californian Thistle Act" for the years 1884 and 1885. The particulars I have curtailed, only furnishing the number of convictions with the total amount of fines inflicted, but giving a full summary for 1885-6:—

| <i>Convictions.</i> | 1883-4. | <i>Fines inflicted.</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| 46 | | £24 0 0 |
| | 1884-5. | |
| 36 | | £16 0 0 |
| | 1885-6. | |
| 2 convictions carrying fines at | s. d. | £ s. d. |
| 1 " " | 1 0 | 0 2 0 |
| 31 " " | 2 6 | 0 2 6 |
| 24 " " | 5 0 | 7 15 0 |
| 23 " " | 10 0 | 12 0 0 |
| 23 " " | 20 0 | 23 0 0 |
| 1 " " | 25 0 | 1 5 0 |
| 6 " " | 40 0 | 12 0 0 |
| 5 " " | 60 0 | 15 0 0 |
| TOTAL 93 | | £71 4 6 |

I herewith beg to furnish as accurate a list as is possible of the number of properties infested with thistles, with the number of known patches, and the extent of area in each district:—

| <i>District.</i> | <i>Properties.</i> | <i>Patches.</i> | <i>Area.</i> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Oatlands | 8 | 14 | 10 acres. |
| Glamorgan | 2 | 3 | a few rods. |
| Spring Bay | 3 | 6 | 1 acre. |
| Sorell | 31 | 91 | 12 acres. |
| New Norfolk | 34 | 116 | 115 " |
| Brighton | 94 | 689 | 341 " |
| Clarence | 57 | 296 | 835 " |
| Glenorchy | 56 | 167 | 350 " |
| New Town and Queenborough | 64 | 121 | 6 " |
| Richmond | 55 | 180 | 45 " |
| Green Ponds | 16 | 48 | 22 " |
| Bothwell | 5 | 10 | 5 " |
| Hamilton | 2 | ... | ... |
| Deloraine | 1 | ... | 10 rods. |
| Port Sorell | 2 | 11 | 5 acres. |
| Huon | 43 | 75 | 65 " |
| Selby | 1 | 2 | 20 rods. |
| Kingborough | 8 | 13 | 2 acres. |
| TOTAL | 482 | 1842 | 1809 acres, 30 rods. |

It is certain that other properties are infested, but unknown to Inspectors, the gentlemen now acting having only been in office since November last. Besides the thistles known to exist on private land, there are thistles on the Crown estate, Main Road, and upon the Railway Lines.

I desire to draw your attention to the serious injury that is likely to accrue to Tasmania by the extension of the Cape Weed, (*Cryptus temma-calendulaceum*), Bathurst Burr, (*Zanthium spinosum*), Gorse, and Briar. These noxious weeds are spreading slowly but surely, and in a few years' time will be as great a curse to the colony as the Californian thistle.

No doubt the Cape Weed has been introduced from Victoria in the fodder provided for the circus horses and imported cattle, also in ships' ballast.

The Bathurst Burr is chiefly confined to the North Coast and along the roads travelled by imported Victorian sheep. This plant is also to be found upon the milk farm at New Town. The introduction of the weed in this instance is clearly to be traced to the removal of manure from the slaughter-house, where the seed must have been deposited by imported stock. The briar is increasing to an alarming extent in Tasmania, and will shortly be beyond control. To successfully cope with this growing pest, I am of opinion that a Noxious Weeds Act should be made law to prevent these objectionable plants spreading throughout the length and breadth of Tasmania.

In New South Wales the Chief Inspector's Report for 1884 shows the necessity of keeping in check, as also the cost that will have to be incurred, to destroy noxious weeds in that colony, viz.—the Bathurst burr, trefoil burr, variegated thistle, and black thistle. The following report of expenditure clearly shows that action should be taken before the imported weeds referred to by me establish themselves throughout the Colony. The cost of clearing the commons of noxious weeds is estimated at £18,085; the temporary commons, £8720; the police paddocks, £5697; the travelling stock reserves, £43,355, and the droving roads throughout the Colony at £32,205; making a lump sum for clearing the whole of £108,012.

An Act is now in course of preparation in New South Wales to provide against the spreading of the prickly pear, which is becoming such a pest, and so increasing that legislation is now absolutely necessary to control its extension.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS A. TABART, *Chief Inspector.*

The Hon. J. W. AGNEW, Chief Secretary.