

(No. 26.)



1858.

T A S M A N I A.

P E T I T I O N

FROM HOBART TOWN.—DISPOSAL OF THE WASTE LANDS.

Presented by Mr. Bedford, and ordered by the Council to be printed, 22 January,
1858.



To the Honourable the President and Members of the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of the City of Hobart Town, in Public Meeting assembled, and also of other Residents of the said City and the Suburbs thereof.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH :

THAT in a Colony so vast in extent as Tasmania, with upwards of Eleven millions of Acres of Waste Lands belonging to the Public for disposal, with a scanty population of about Eighty thousand souls, with a salubrious climate not to be surpassed on the face of the Globe, and with ready markets for all her produce, your Petitioners believe the question as to the readiest and most efficacious means of increasing the population of this Island, and of thereby advancing her material interests, is of the most vital and transcendent importance.

That the gold discoveries in various parts of the Colony have, unfortunately, proved of so trivial a character as not to possess a sufficient charm to attract strangers to these shores ; so that in point of population (without a considerable accession to which so large an Island as Tasmania cannot progress beyond her present position) the Colony must remain stationary, if indeed she does not retrograde.

That your Petitioners are of opinion, that the only hope for the Colony now appears to be, the immediate establishment of a wise, economical, and liberal system of alienating the Waste Lands of the Crown in Tasmania, for the purpose of encouraging the ingress and settlement in the Colony of a large and industrial Rural Yeomanry.

That it is indispensable for the future welfare and prosperity of the Colony that the Waste Lands should be unlocked, whereby the sons of Tasmania above the age of 18 years, and other males of that age, should be enabled to select One Section of Land only to each individual for agricultural purposes, instead of being, as is too frequently the case, driven out of the Colony to seek their fortune elsewhere ; and that your Petitioners are of opinion that the First-class Lands should consist of Town and Suburban Sections only, and which should be sold by public auction.

That your Petitioners think that Lands of the Second and Third Classes ought to be disposed of by selection only, in Sections not exceeding One hundred Acres, (not more than one Section to be granted to the same individual), on the following conditions : namely,—at five shillings per acre on Ten years' credit, without interest ; two acres to be cleared and cultivated annually, with mutual fencing, if required, and the actual residence of the purchaser on the Land, or of some person in his employ. The purchase-money to be paid by equal instalments of Five Pounds, as follows :—the first instalment to be paid in the second year after entering upon the Land ; the second instalment in the fourth year ; the third instalment in the sixth year ; the fourth instalment in the eighth year ; the fifth and last instalment in the tenth year ; and in the event of such conditions being duly performed, then a grant in fee simple should issue to the purchaser. No transfer of the Land should be allowed during the above period ; but the non-fulfilment of any such conditions should be attended with absolute forfeiture of the Land ; and that in case any One hundred Acre Section should front any road, river, stream of water, or the sea-coast, such frontage ought not to exceed eighteen chains. The foregoing regulations should be strictly enforced ; the cost of survey paid before entering upon the Land ; and in no case should the survey-fee exceed Five Pounds, to be payable previous to entering upon the Land. And in the event of the decease of the occupant of any Section of Land, who may have resided there, and made improvements thereon according to the required conditions, and the widow or other legal representatives of the deceased should be unable to continue the clearing

and cultivation of the Land, from the want of means or otherwise, then such Land should be disposed of to the best advantage for the sole benefit of the widow or such representatives: the purchaser to be required to fulfil the conditions imposed upon the previous occupant.

That your Petitioners consider it advisable, that Lands of the Second and Third Classes should be disposed of, by selection, in Sections of Six hundred and forty Acres (one Section only to be sold to one and the same person) on credit for Five Years at One Pound per Acre; one-fourth of the purchase-money to be paid on entering upon the Land, and the remainder to be paid by equal annual instalments: but in case any Six hundred and forty Acre Section should front any road, river, stream of water, or the sea-coast, such frontage should not exceed forty-five chains. The Land to revert to the Crown in default of payment of any of the above instalments. The foregoing regulations should be strictly enforced; and the cost of survey not to exceed Ten Pounds, to be paid before entering upon the Land.

That, as the Timber Trade of the Colony is of considerable importance as a staple export, your Petitioners would respectfully suggest that the same two classes of Land be open for selection in blocks not exceeding One thousand Acres, at Five Shillings per Acre, for sawing and splitting purposes, on the following conditions:—namely, that the purchaser erect a Saw-mill within two years after entering upon the Land, and expend One thousand Pounds for every Five hundred Acres,—half the purchase-money to be paid on taking possession of the Land, and the remainder to be paid at the expiration of Three Years from the date of occupation; the cost of survey to be paid before taking possession of the Land. And in case the required conditions should not be complied with, the Crown should resume the Lands.

That your Petitioners think it most desirable that Roads should be laid out in connection with all Waste Lands henceforth to be surveyed for disposal, in any part of the Colony, in order to obviate litigation, and also to facilitate internal communication generally.

That it is the opinion of your Petitioners that the best Second-class Lands, suitable for the One hundred Acre Sections, should be held as Primary Reserves in every District of the Island; and that such reserves should be immediately surveyed, so as to be open and ready for selection.

That your Petitioners conceive it to be essentially necessary that the Lands of the Second and Third Classes should not be sold by auction, but disposed of by selection only; because the competition of public auctions will necessarily prove detrimental to the interests of small capitalists, and particularly so to the poor man, who may possess merely sufficient means to avail himself of the proposed One hundred Acre Section system by selection, for the purpose of settling himself and family upon the Land.

That your Petitioners consider that Lands of the Third Class should be let for Five Years, for grazing purposes only, in blocks not exceeding Five thousand Acres, at a rental of Ten Pounds per thousand Acres, subject to revocation at six months' notice, provided the Land should be required for sale in whole or in part.

That your Petitioners beg to recommend the necessity for the shortest, simplest, and cheapest form of conveyance of Crown Lands being adopted, as is the case in Canada.

That your Petitioners deem it worthy of consideration, whether or not one-half of all moneys arising from the disposal or rental of Waste Lands should be appropriated towards making Roads and constructing Bridges for opening up the Country, especially in the new agricultural localities, and the other half appropriated to the General Revenue of the Colony towards paying off the loans raised upon Debentures. In throwing out this suggestion, your Petitioners are not unmindful of the prospect of the speedy establishment of District Municipalities, which will, of course, then have the construction and repair of the Roads under their control: but it is feared the day is somewhat distant before each Municipality will be in possession of an adequate fund for carrying on Road operations to any advantageous extent, so far, at least, as new settlers are concerned.

That your Petitioners are aware that some persons think that the Waste Lands of the Colony should be given away to intending settlers upon the one simple condition of clearing and cultivating, as the most powerful incentive to an influx of small agriculturists; but surely the scheme deferentially propounded by your Petitioners, by which One hundred Acres may be secured at the really nominal price of Twenty-five Pounds, payable over the space of Ten years, is almost tantamount to a free and absolute gift.

That your Petitioners need scarcely point to the great Canadian Colony, which is annually being peopled by a race of sturdy sons of the soil, attracted thither by a liberal, enlightened, and acceptable Land measure as if by the law of magnetism. Let the bright example of that stupendous British Dependency only be followed by your Honourable Council, and who will

say that this Colony, too, may not rise into material greatness and power? To promote agriculture is a noble object; for, unquestionably, the agricultural interest of a Country is that which makes it great and powerful.

That your Petitioners are decidedly of opinion that the Waste Lands will never be extensively taken up for cultivation at a higher price than your Petitioners have ventured to recommend, since the cost of clearing, cultivating, fencing, and so forth will not possibly admit of any advance on that price to the purchaser.

That it is manifestly of the last importance that, in any Legislative measure for the disposal of the Waste Lands, a strong prohibitory clause should be inserted to prevent not only monopoly, but anything approaching to monopoly or Land jobbery.

That your Petitioners confidently rely upon the sound sense and wisdom of your Honourable Council to devise such a measure for the beneficial disposal of the Waste Lands of the Island as will prove generally acceptable; and then shall the Divine decree: "Let the Earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind," be fulfilled, and "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose;" and, furthermore, that this beautiful British Dependency may be exalted into national grandeur, and become in reality hereafter "great, glorious, and free!"

Your Petitioners therefore most humbly and earnestly pray that your Honourable Council will be pleased to take the premises into its serious consideration, and to frame such a Waste Lands measure for the disposal of the Waste Lands of the Crown in Tasmania as may have the effect of bringing population to these shores, and thus of converting the dense forests of this magnificent Island into fair and cultivated fields and fertile domains.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c. &c.

[Here follow 675 Signatures.]