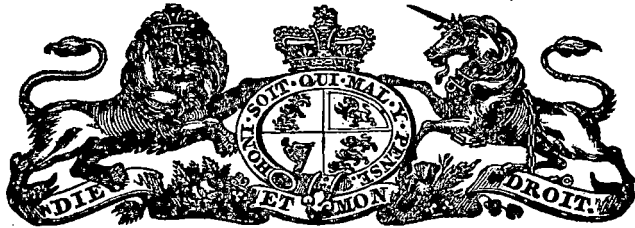


(No. 50.)



1878.

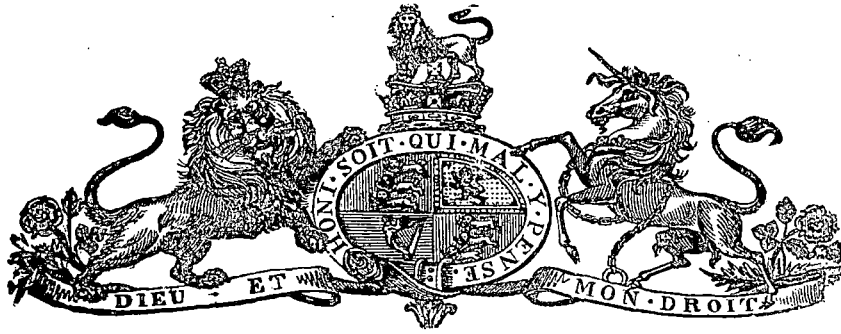
T A S M A N I A.

H O U S E O F A S S E M B L Y.

STATISTICS, 1877:

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN.

Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be printed, July 17, 1878.



Legislative Council Office, 13th July, 1878.

SIR,

I REGRET to have to inform you that, in spite of my most strenuous endeavours, the Statistics of this Colony for 1877 will not be ready for presentation to Parliament in a complete state until some time after the opening of the session.

The main cause of this is the delay and difficulty in obtaining some of the returns from two Municipalities—Glenorchy and Oatlands—from Oatlands, those of Municipal revenue and expenditure, &c., and of litigation; from Glenorchy, the Municipal return, and more especially the Magisterial, of which notwithstanding repeated explanations given, both in writing and verbally, part is still incomplete, and the rest is altogether untrustworthy; and there is not the slightest hope of the errors being corrected except by a second hand. The litigation return from Oatlands reached me only on July 8th, an Officer of the Audit Department having by authority of the Governor in Council been despatched to Oatlands to obtain the information which was not otherwise forthcoming.

I received the Municipal return as completed yesterday. The Magisterial return from Glenorchy will have to be corrected, and perhaps made out altogether *de novo*, in the same way. Meanwhile, the compilation and printing of long and elaborate returns depending on these have been stopped.

I have had a good deal of trouble with some of the Road Trusts also, partly from delay in making needful corrections, when the returns had to be sent back for that purpose, and partly on account of the persons furnishing them not having sufficient education or knowledge of the principles of accounts to enable them to supply correct information.

As an erroneous impression seems to prevail in reference to this matter, I take this opportunity (presuming that this letter will be laid before Parliament and printed) of correcting it. It is with regard to the operation of "The Statistical Returns Act." In reference to the Municipalities and Road Trusts, that Act requires nothing more than was required by previous Acts, only it imposes a penalty for not complying with the law—it only gives force to that which before was a dead letter. It is clearly right that these bodies should be called upon to furnish accounts because they receive public moneys: and within my own experience numerous instances of great irregularities occurred in former years before Parliament saw fit to exercise an effective supervision over their receipts and expenditure. As to the other returns not involving accountability in regard of public money, &c. the persons furnishing them are in every instance paid, and in the case of some of the smaller districts, liberally. Some years ago, when the returns were made more elaborate than formerly, the allowance was increased by one-half; and since that a special sum, according to circumstances, has been granted for the Crime returns.

Before concluding, I venture to make one suggestion, which would greatly facilitate the printing of the Statistics, and save much time and expense. If a sufficient supply of type were provided a large portion of the matter might be kept up from year to year, so that instead of setting up the type anew every time, it would be sufficient to make such alterations as might be necessary. Thus, for example, all the decennial returns might be kept standing. A considerable amount of money would thus be saved every year, quite enough, I am sure, to yield a considerable profit on the outlay; and the Printing Office would not be so hard pressed as it is at present just at the time when the amount of other work is greatest.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

E. C. NOWELL.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.