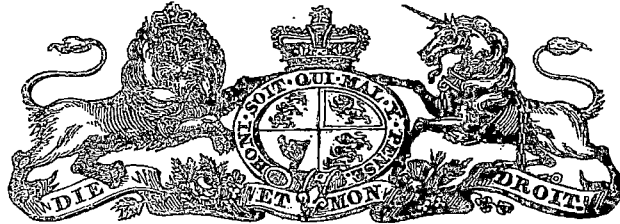


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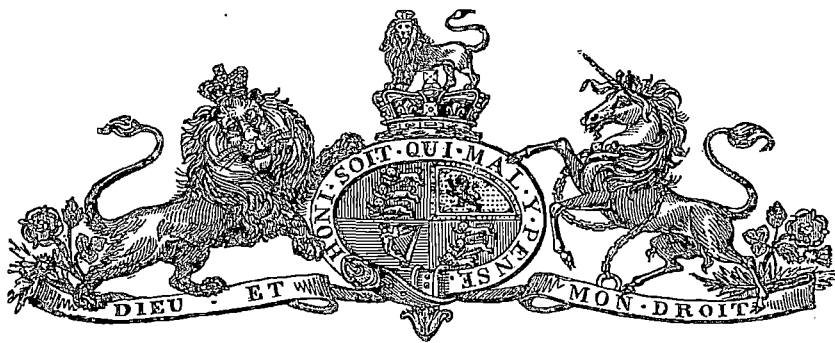
1856.

T A S M A N I A.

M E M O R A N D U M.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND VIEWS OF THE MINISTRY.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Henty, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
26 May, 1857.



25 May, 1857.

MEMORANDUM.

It is not the usual practice for a Ministry immediately after accepting office, during a current Session of Parliament, to offer a detailed exposition of its policy, but to reserve such statement till after the leisure of a recess has enabled it to mature its measures; and the present Ministry does not desire to sanction an inconvenient departure from this course. But, at this juncture in the affairs of the Colony, it deems it expedient that Parliament should, without any delay, be made acquainted with the general principles and views on the most prominent questions of immediate public interest on which it has agreed.

1. Adverting to the causes which led to the last change of Ministry, the Administration will hold itself bound to maintain unimpaired and undiminished the powers, the privileges, and the dignity of the Legislature as representing the whole Colony.

2. The Ministry recognizes the necessity of a thorough and rigorous Retrenchment in the Public Expenditure, and is prepared to adopt measures with that view at once. From information afforded by the Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Ministry of Mr. Champ for the southern side of the Island it has already derived very valuable suggestions, to some of which there will be no delay in giving practical effect; and, without compromising its own discretion, relieving itself of the obligation of independent enquiry, or in any manner evading its own proper responsibility, the Ministry is prepared to render to the recommendations of the gentlemen who have devoted themselves with so much zeal and assiduity to the task of investigation the deference and consideration which they may justly claim.

3. The principal portion of the debt of the Colony was contracted for purposes for which the Public Lands have always been held liable. Those lands are now the security of English and Colonial creditors for the liquidation of that debt, and by their sale its extinction has ever been contemplated. But when the debt was contracted, or augmented to its present amount, a large, and probably the most valuable, portion of the Public Lands was occupied under Pastoral Licences, rendering them not at once available for sale. Those licences expiring at an early date, it was hoped that before it arrived the Legislature would have passed a Lands Bill, determining the conditions on which the lands generally of the Colony should be sold; but that it has not yet done, and no lands are now properly disposable without the condition set forth in the *Imperial Waste Lands Act* being first complied with,—of the lots being surveyed. To prevent, however, delay from that cause, and consequent prejudice to the Revenue, it is proposed, under the circumstances of the case, to submit to Parliament at this Sitting a short enabling Bill, dispensing for the present with the condition of *previous* survey, and immediately thereafter to advertise for sale such lands as, it may be reasonably hoped, will materially assist to meet the liabilities becoming due in February next, and in respect to which lands a previous survey is not imperatively required.

4. In the reduction and consolidation of Departments of the Public Service the principle of Compensation has been hitherto recognized; and the Ministry will be prepared to give to any rule sanctioned by Parliament for carrying it out that inflexible application to Officers whose services may be dispensed with, which will avert all imputation or suspicion of unfair distinction on its part in the performance of an invidious but imperative duty, and also prevent those importunities of interest and friendship by which a Government is often embarrassed in such circumstances.

5. Retrenchment cannot be completed at once, and so as to relieve the Finances of the Colony immediately: indeed, just in proportion as it is thorough and extensive, it may entail an augmentation of disbursements aggravating the occasion of a resort to Taxation, which, the Ministry is unanimously and decisively of opinion, should fall principally on the great property classes of the Colony. It is deeply sensible of the inexpediency, more especially at the present crisis, of adding, in any way which can be fairly and consistently avoided, to the burdens which fall on the poorer classes: it is impressed with the necessity of attracting such classes to the Colony, rather than diminishing their inducements to remain in it; and it relies upon the sound sense and the equitable principles of the wealthier portion of the community for a cheerful acquiescence in such burdens as it may be found, after exhausting the modes of economy, absolutely necessary to call on them to bear.

6. The importance of adopting a sound and *fixed* system in the disposal of the Public Lands, and a consideration of the various interests and conflicting opinions which require to be duly weighed and consulted in such a measure, led to the question being remitted to a Committee of the Assembly by which the main features of a scheme have been suggested. The Ministry, in accepting the Report of the Committee as a basis of legislation, is not prepared to affirm all its details; and its attention will be devoted in the ensuing recess to devise means by which the Public Lands may, on the most favourable conditions, be made eligible for settlement, so as to encourage the growth of a small proprietary class in the country.

7. The Ministry is cordially united in opinion as to the expediency of augmenting the powers of existing Municipalities, and extending, wherever the requisite elements for working it out can be found, the principle of Local Self-government. In the evidence which the proceedings of Parliament have already furnished of the difficulties by which the disposal of questions not of a general character is beset; in the tendency those proceedings have sometimes exhibited to a competition by Representatives for special advantages to particular localities,—thus leading to an unequal apportionment of the General Revenue, as well as to a perverted estimate of what are the proper duties of a Representative; and in the inevitable ignorance with which Parliament must, on most occasions, deliberate on purely local claims, the Ministry has discovered new reasons for delegating local interests and affairs, more and more, to local bodies,—and with that view its measures will be systematically devised.

8. The system of Education established in the Colony is in harmony with its Ecclesiastical polity, which recognizes no paramount religious communion; it is adapted to the wants of a population divided in its religious opinions; it is free from all liability to perversion as an instrument of proselytism; it interposes no impediment to the religious instruction of youth; it is believed to be in accordance with the sentiments of the great majority of the people; and the Ministry will lend an earnest support to every means for extending education in conformity with its principles: but it trusts that the period is not remote when the various Districts of the Colony will be in a situation to take this interest, as well as others, to a great extent out of the custody of the Central Government, not only without any prejudice, but with advantage, to the objects contemplated,—a result which the Ministry is prepared, with due precautions, in every way to facilitate.

9. In Law Reform an ample field is opened by the changing circumstances of the Colony, and the new wants thus called into existence. (1.) The present *Masters and Servants Act* it is contemplated to amend, so as to assimilate the law more nearly than at present to that of England. (2.) *The Licensed Victuallers Act* contains some harsh and needlessly stringent provisions which generally defeat their own design, but which likewise are sometimes employed as a means of capricious annoyance; and its amendment will be proceeded with. (3.) A measure to facilitate the recovery of Small Debts by an easy and inexpensive process was adverted to in the Speech of the Governor on opening Parliament. The recess will be taken advantage of to mature it.

But the Ministry will not limit its attention to the Acts enumerated; there are others, in which experience has disclosed the expediency or the necessity of amendment, which will not be overlooked.

10. The Legislative Council has passed the Appropriation Act for nine months only, which expire in September next; and the work which the Ministry requires to perform before Parliament re-assembles is weighty and difficult: it will demand undivided attention, anxious deliberation, most assiduous application. The Ministry has no desire to exaggerate it, but it is due to itself that its magnitude should be distinctly set forth, and the brief period left for its performance; but it hopes to accomplish it—if no unnecessary delay be interposed to the prorogation of Parliament, after a Session which has extended greatly beyond the period contemplated when it began, thus most unduly taxing all the Members of the Legislature, but especially those whose homes and avocations lie at a distance—without seeking an extended vote, or any other provision for carrying on the Government than that which Parliament has already made.

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