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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

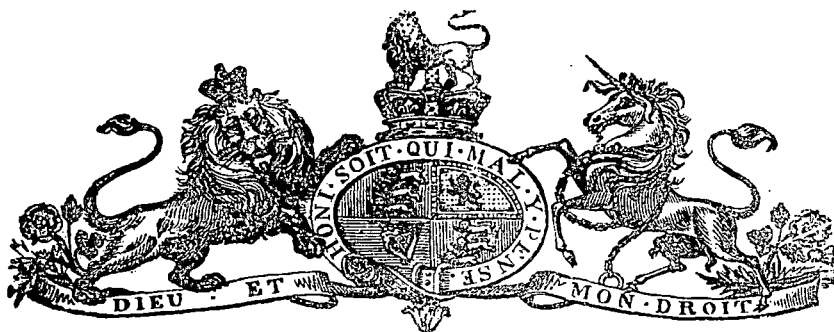
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**EDUCATION:**

**PETITION TO THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL FROM THE  
BISHOP OF HOBART.**

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Laid upon the Table by the Premier, July 29, 1884, and ordered by the House to  
be printed.



*To His Excellency the Governor in Council.*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I HAVE the honor to state for the information of Your Excellency that a Petition, numerously signed by the Roman Catholics residing in Tasmania, was sent by them to the Houses of Parliament last Session through their Representatives.

The Petition represents a grievance and a prayer. The grievance is—

1. That the system of public education as by law established in Tasmania is of such a nature that the petitioners cannot, under its provisions, bring up their children according to the tenets and teaching of their Church in the all-important question of education.
2. That, whilst recognising for all denominations in this Colony the fullest liberty in the education of their children, the petitioners deem it a hardship that they cannot avail themselves of the public funds to which they contribute, and which are set apart for the purpose of public education, without contravening those principles in virtue of which Roman Catholics conscientiously believe that education, to be worthy of the name, should be based upon and guided by religion.
3. That the hardship in question is aggravated by the fact that it is, in certain cases, rendered compulsory on parents to send their children to public schools, conducted though they be on a system so opposed to the religious convictions of the petitioners.
4. That in view of these premises the petitioners pray the Legislature to adopt such means as will enable the Roman Catholics of Tasmania, who represent about one-fourth of the population of the Colony, to benefit by the provisions made for public education, and to bring up their children, as their Church so strictly enjoins, as good Christians and useful members of society.
5. The petitioners suggest a practical remedy for the grievance complained of; that is, the adoption of a system fair to all sections of the community, and familiarly known as "payment by results."

This system simply consists in paying for work done, or, in other words, a fair wage for a fair day's work. It remunerates the teacher of the school for the amount of secular instruction he imparts to his pupils according to the standard prescribed by the Government. The school is open to the Government Inspector, and allows the school children to be examined by him in those subjects of secular instruction as are the pupils of the State schools, and is content with payment to be made upon his report and certificate as to the amount of proficiency made, thus supplying a guarantee that the intentions of the State are carried out, and that the public funds are properly expended. The principle involved in the system proposed is, as the petition goes on to say, in harmony with the spirit of the Constitution, which guarantees ample civil and religious rights to all classes, and in harmony with the Courts of Equity, which uphold the parent's right to determine the character of the education of his children, and in harmony also with the dictates of justice, which entitles us to receive from the State in return for our portion of the taxes some equivalent which we could avail ourselves of without violating conscience.

It may be necessary to observe that in proposing this system it is not the design of the Roman Catholics that it should be imposed on other sections of the community against their will. They only wish to intimate that they would themselves avail of it willingly and be satisfied with it.

The common objection used against "payment by results" is, that the Government, in recognising it, would be compelled to re-grant State aid to religion which was abolished some years since. Now, I believe this objection to be both *unfair* and *groundless*. For the payment referred to is not for promoting religious purposes, but for imparting instruction in those branches of secular science prescribed by the Board of Education. No more is sought for than is given to the public schools, and if religious instruction is super-added it is at the expense of the parties themselves. With equal justice could it be said that the salary of a civil servant may be regarded as State aid to religion because he imparts religious instruction to a school of children, as that the salary of a teacher of a school conducted on the system of "payment by results" may be so regarded because he teaches religion to his pupils.

Another objection may be raised on the plea of inefficiency and extra costliness to the State. In reply I give the following extract from a discourse delivered recently at Christ Church, Redfern, N.S. Wales, by Bishop Barry, of Sydney, whose opinion, based as it is on a large experience in England, carries great weight. "In England the two kinds of schools—the schools that belong to the various religious bodies, and the schools that are here called public schools, but are there called board schools—exist side by side. The Government recognises both, and if the education is equally good, rewards both equally; and I have no hesitation in saying that the co-existence of these two kinds of schools is good for both, and the community. In the first place it brings in a very far less costly and expensive system. \* \* \* The mixed system we have at home I suppose does not cost the community more than half or two-thirds of what would be the case if it were all on one uniform system such as is maintained here."

A similar system could, I think, be adopted in Tasmania with little or no inconvenience to the Government, for all that is required on its part is to recognise the payment by result schools as they are established by the religious bodies, and to place them on equal footing with the public schools. Such a modification would, I believe, give general satisfaction, as it would meet the religious requirements, lessen the cost of education to the State, extend its benefits to a wider circle than the present, and terminate the monopoly now enjoyed by the public schools, and which is known to be detrimental to the best interests of education.

On the last occasion on which the question of public education was discussed in our Parliament, the Roman Catholics of Tasmania represented their grievance on this head in the form of petition, but to no effect. It is, however, anxiously hoped that the present petition will meet with that favourable consideration which the importance of the subject merits. But whatever may be the result, the Catholics are resolved to continue their support to the Catholic schools already established, and to open others; for, seeing that the tendency of the existing system of public education is to weaken faith, and to induce indifferentism—the first step to unbelief—they are prepared to make sacrifices in order to preserve to their children that faith which they consider necessary to secure their happiness in this and the future life. In doing so they are compelled to *tax themselves a second time*: for, whilst contributing to the support of their own schools, they are required by the law of the land to contribute also to the "public education fund," and thus suffer an injustice from which they claim a right to be relieved, considering that they constitute an important section of the community, who share with their fellow-colonists the burthens of the State and assist in advancing its prosperity. This feeling of injustice necessarily produces discontent, which it is the duty of a wise Government to remove, for as long as it exists it will be a cancer in the body politic, calculated to poison the springs of loyalty to their rulers, and to disturb the bonds of peace and harmony which should prevail among the people.

In behalf of myself and clergy, and in behalf of the Roman Catholics of Tasmania, whose spiritual interests are entrusted to our care, I respectfully request Your Excellency will take the prayer of their petition into your favourable consideration.

I have the honor to be,

Your Excellency's obedient servant,

+ DANIEL MURPHY, *Bishop of Hobart.*

*Hobart, July 16, 1884.*