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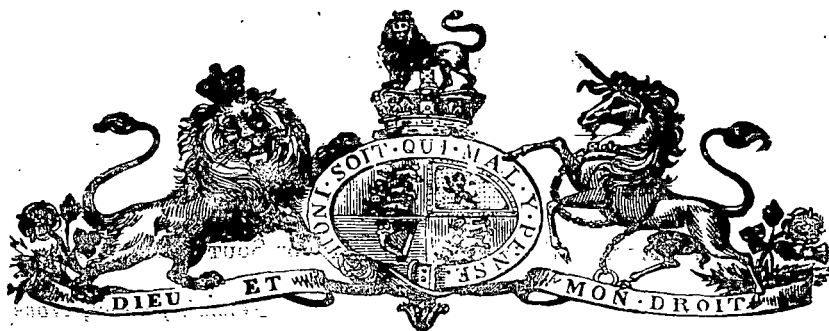
1889.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

APPOINTMENT OF COLONIAL GOVERNORS:

COPIES OF DESPACHES ADDRESSED TO HIS EXCELLENCY
THE GOVERNOR.

Laid upon the Table by the Treasurer, and ordered by the House of Assembly
to be printed, October 31, 1889.



LORD KNUTSFORD to the GOVERNORS of the AUSTRALIAN COLONIES and NEW ZEALAND.

Downing-street, July 8th, 1889.

MY LORD,

SIR,

In the despatch which I addressed to the Officer Administering the Government of Queensland on the 30th November 1888, I stated that on another occasion I should deal further with the communications which I had received from New South Wales and South Australia, as well as from Queensland, representing that the Colonial Ministers ought to have an opportunity of expressing an opinion before any Governor is appointed, and also with the question whether the area of selection should be limited in the case of appointments to Australian Colonies.

Of the remaining Australasian Colonies under Responsible Governments, Victoria has declared strongly against any communications with the Colonial Ministers in regard to the selection of the Governor; and the Governments of New Zealand and Tasmania have made no representation on the subject to Her Majesty's Government. I may add that although there has been no official correspondence with Canada on this question, I have been informed that the Dominion Government are decidedly of opinion that the appointment of a Governor-General should be made without any reference to the responsible Ministers.

Her Majesty's Government have read with attention the debates in the Colonial Parliaments, and without referring in detail to those discussions it may suffice for me to say generally that the fuller reports of them have confirmed the opinion which Her Majesty's Government had been led to form after considering the information previously received by telegraph, namely, that the expediency of making any constitutional change in the mode of appointing the Governor of an Australian Colony has not been established. They believe, in fact, that the objections stated in the letter addressed on November 15th last to the Agent-General for South Australia, a copy of which is annexed for convenience of reference, greatly outweigh the advantage which they might in some cases derive from a knowledge of the opinion of the gentlemen at the time serving as Colonial Ministers.

Her Majesty's Government feel that they are justified in claiming, for themselves as well as for their predecessors, that a remarkable measure of success, both as regards the capacity and character of the Governors appointed, and as regards the approval with which those appointments have been received in the Colonies, has attended the sincere endeavours which have at all times been made to secure the best possible selection in each case. They desire, at the same time, to point out the difficulties which might arise if the area of selection were absolutely limited, as has been suggested, to persons who have held high political office in England, or have been members of the Imperial Parliament. Such persons are frequently not prepared to retire from a promising public career at home in order to serve out of England for a term of years, and it is worthy of observation that the suggested limitation would have excluded almost all of the most successful Australasian Governors.

It appears, indeed, to be necessary on every ground that Her Majesty's Government should conduct, without assistance from the Colony, the confidential negotiations preliminary to the selection of a Governor, while they could not invite a person so selected by them to allow his name to be submitted for the approval of gentlemen at a distance, to whom (though well and favourably known here) he may be altogether unknown.

I can therefore only repeat that the true interests of the Colonies, and the preservation of friendly and constitutional relations between the Colonies and this country will, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, be best secured by adhering to the principles upon which the appointment of Governor has hitherto been made.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) KNUTSFORD.

The Governors of the Australian Colonies and New Zealand.

Annexure.

COLONIAL OFFICE to the AGENT-GENERAL for SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Downing-street, November 15, 1888.

SIR,

I AM directed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th instant, conveying the renewed request of your Government that they may have an opportunity, before any appointment is made, of expressing an opinion with regard to the person whom it may be proposed to appoint as Governor of South Australia.

Lord Knutsford regrets that he is not able to give to this request any other answer than that returned to the Government of Queensland last month, in the letter which was read in the House of Commons by the Under Secretary of State on Monday last. It would be a great satisfaction and assistance to the Secretary of State in the performance of a very responsible duty, if it were possible in some manner to ascertain, before the Queen's pleasure is taken, that the gentleman whom he thinks suitable is also acceptable to the Government and people of the Colony in which he is to represent Her Majesty for several years. And Lord Knutsford trusts that it will be understood that the inability of Her Majesty's Government to comply with the wish of your Ministers in this matter is in no way connected with any indisposition to consult their views in other cases whenever practicable.

As Lord Knutsford stated to the Agent-General for Queensland, Her Majesty's Government feel precluded, by the conditions of the Governor's office, from having recourse to the advice of the Colonial Ministry in regard to the selection of a Governor. There are certain extra-Colonial functions in the discharge of which the Governor must be responsible to the Crown alone, and his action in regard to which does not interfere with or affect the full responsibility of the Ministry in the internal affairs of the Colony. But, independently of his more strictly imperial duties, the Governor occupies a position in regard to political matters which appears to preclude the local Ministry from taking any part in his selection. The antagonism between parties in the Colonial Parliaments has frequently been very strong, and on the retirement of the Ministry, which had virtually controlled the selection of the Governor, the succeeding Ministry might not improbably feel doubt as to his impartiality. For example, in dealing with the question—often one of much difficulty—whether a dissolution of Parliament ought to be granted or withheld, if the Governor should, however *bonâ fide*, act in accordance with the political interests of the party which had approved his appointment, his fairness might not improbably be called in question by the other side.

Indeed, it seems obvious that in this and similar cases the relations of the Governor to the Colonists, as well as to the Crown, might be gravely embarrassed.

I am further to point out that a public man of high standing could not well be asked to undertake an office subject to the approval of others at a distance who may have little information as to his fitness, but beyond such personal considerations the constitutional obstacle which has been referred to appears to Lord Knutsford to be insurmountable.

I am, &c.,

(Signed) ROBERT G. W. HERBERT.

Sir A. BLYTH.