

(No. 95.)



1878.

T A S M A N I A.

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

DEFENCES OF THE COLONY:

DESPATCHES.

Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be printed, October 11, 1878.



TASMANIA, No. 32.

Downing-street, 13th August, 1878.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch, No. 26, of the 4th of June, informing me of the progress which has been made in Tasmania in carrying out the measures of defence recommended by Sir William Jervois, R.E.

I have read your Despatch with much interest, and have caused a copy of it to be forwarded for the information of the Secretary of State for War; and I have much pleasure in expressing to you the satisfaction with which I have observed the energetic efforts which have been made by you and by your Government for the organisation of a force for the defence of the Colony.

I take this opportunity of acknowledging the receipt of your previous Despatch, No. 20, of the 12th of April on the same subject.

I have, &c.

Governor WELD, C.M.G.

(Signed) M. E. HICKS-BEACH.

No. 20.

Government House, Hobart Town, 12th April, 1878.

SIR,

WITH reference to my Despatch, No. 40, of 22nd August* last, and your reply, No. 30, of 29th October, 1877, I have the honor to enclose copies of further correspondence on the subject of defence which has recently taken place between Ministers, myself, and the Commodore commanding on the Australian station.

I have, &c.

The Right Honorable Sir M. HICKS-BEACH, Bart.

(Signed) FRED. A. WELD.

No. 26.

Government House, Hobart Town, 4th June, 1878.

SIR,

1. THE question of defence has, as you are already aware, been for some time past engaging my attention and that of my responsible Advisers.

2. You have already received telegrams from me regarding guns, gatlings, and rifles which are required. Men are now at work upon one unfinished battery, and Lieut.-Col. Scratchley, R.E., is preparing the designs for a new one. Captain Boddam, late of the Royal Artillery, has arrived here under engagement from the Government as staff officer, and has entered on his duties with much zeal and intelligence. A Government official of the Electric Telegraph Department has proceeded to Melbourne to study torpedo construction and practice, and the necessary submarine wire has been purchased, the torpedoes themselves being obtained from Melbourne. The necessary force of Volunteers has been enrolled and is now rapidly advancing towards efficiency; excellent practice was made on Her Majesty's Birthday by the Artillery under the command of Captain Crowther, and the Rifle Regiment is assiduous in attention at drill. Much aid has been rendered by Lieut.-Colonel St. Hill, and his exertions, tact, and temper have surmounted several of the difficulties which inevitably attend the organisation of Volunteer Corps, and the appointment of officers. The Honorable Sir James Wilson, K.C.M.G., has also lent his valuable assistance.

3. At present the enrolled force stands as follows:—

	<i>Artillery, (all ranks.)</i>
Hobart Town.....	232 (including 5 staff sergeants and 20 band).
Launceston	83 (including 1 staff sergeant).
Total.....	315

* MEMO. by Ministers, 5. 4. 78; Memo. by Governor, 8. 4. 78; Letter to Commodore, 8. 4. 78. These enclosures are the same as those mentioned in Despatch, No. 26, of the 4th June.

	<i>Rifle Regiment.</i>
Hobart Town.....	320 (including 2 staff sergeants).
Launceston	160
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Total	480
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These numbers do not include the Commandant, Staff Officer, and Sergeant Major.

4. You will observe that this force is in excess of that required by Sir W. Jervois in his Report, but it has been thought well, for various reasons, to keep our force rather in excess of the exact number strictly necessary to work the guns and protect them; and, in the event of war, it may be advisable yet farther to increase it, which we should not have the slightest difficulty in doing to a large extent.

5. I may add, that the officers have been selected as men able and willing to devote themselves to their work in a business-like manner, and that both officers and men are of a superior class.

6. Ministers have already taken upon themselves a very large responsibility, and have, on emergency, incurred a large expenditure, and, as soon as Parliament meets, further expenditure; as, for instance, the appointment of one or two salaried officers, and of a small permanent force as recommended by me in a Memorandum already before you, and again by His Excellency Sir W. Jervois in his Report:

7. Ministers requested me to forward to the Commodore commanding on the Australian station a Memorandum,* which I now do myself the honor to enclose. I also enclose my reply to Ministers,† my covering letter to Commodore Hoskins, and his reply,‡ which, you will observe, substantially concurs with views already expressed by me. At the same time I beg to be permitted again to impress the great importance of this position in a strategical point of view. The carrying trade round this part of the South Seas would converge just south of Tasmania, when it does not pass through Bass's Straits, which wash its northern shore: hostile cruisers would probably lie off this southern part of Tasmania to intercept this commerce; and I cannot too strongly urge that fast armed steamers and gun-boats should be sent out in time to anticipate the destruction or capture of British merchant ships. The Commodore agrees with me that Hobart Town would be a natural head-quarters for vessels on such service, and we shall very shortly have batteries of very considerable power, under cover of which they could refit.

8. It affords me much pleasure, in conclusion, to be able, after having so long pressed this question of defence upon the consideration of this Colony, and having devoted my most earnest endeavours to carry it to a successful issue, now to assure you that this Colony is manfully doing its duty, and that I have the greatest hopes that, when Parliament meets, it will approve of what has been done, and afford means to carry out the work to a satisfactory completion; and I trust that the Home Government will remember that this Colony, though now prosperous, is yet small and comparatively poor, and that fresh taxation is even now proposed in part to meet these efforts to do its duty in co-operating in the defence of this part of Her Majesty's dominions, and, indirectly, of the commerce of Great Britain and the adjacent colonies, which passes by our shores. I therefore beg that, bearing this in mind, you will obtain all possible assistance and aid to our efforts; and I make this request with all confidence, and in the full assurance that the generosity which has been extended on former occasions to colonies far richer and better able to protect themselves, and less exposed to attack, will not be denied to a poorer and weaker Colony especially exposed because in an important strategical position, now, more particularly, when it is straining every nerve to do its duty.

I have, &c.
(Signed) FRED. A. WELD.

The Right Honorable Sir M. HICKS-BEACH, Bart.

From His Excellency the GOVERNOR to Commodore HOSKINS, R.N.

Government House, Hobart Town, 8th April, 1878.

SIR,

My responsible Advisers have requested me to urge on your consideration certain views expressed in a Memorandum which I enclose, as I think it best that their arguments should be expressed in their own words. Knowing your desire to promote the public service, and that you are fully aware of the importance of this Port and position in the interests of Australian commerce, and also regarding the wide and varied interests that you have to consider, and the responsibility that rests upon you in your extensive command, I rest confident that you will take such steps as may be best calculated to protect the interests of this Colony, and of the service generally.

I have, &c.
(Signed) FRED. A. WELD.

Commodore HOSKINS, R.N., H.M.S. Wolverine.

See Paper No. 37 for the following:—

* Ministers' Memo. to the Governor, dated 5th April, 1878.

† The Governor's reply, dated 8th April, 1878.

‡ Commodore Hoskins' letter to the Governor of the 2nd May, 1878.