

(No. 55.)



1856.

T A S M A N I A.

P E T I T I O N F R O M H. B U T T O N.

W A S T E L A N D S.

Presented by Mr. Adye Douglas, and ordered by the House to be printed,
12 February, 1857.



*To the Honourable the House of Assembly of Tasmania, in
Parliament assembled.*

The humble Petition of Henry Button, of Launceston.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH.

THAT, as labour is the basis of all wealth, increase of population is indispensable to the prosperity of a community or nation.

That in the absence of precious metals or other valuable minerals, which allure so many with the prospect of becoming suddenly rich, it is highly important that in this Colony the greatest facilities should be offered for the occupation of the Waste Lands, and the settlement thereon of industrious families. Experience has proved that the schemes of Immigration hitherto adopted have been insufficient for this purpose; for, whilst the Colony incurs a large expenditure, the Immigrants, having no stake in the Island, leave as soon as their contracts expire (and in some cases before), and take up their permanent abode in the adjoining Colonies, where brighter prospects are before them.

That no system of Land regulations can be considered too liberal which attracts and secures desirable additions to our population; as it is only by increasing the home consumption of local products that we can hope to impart anything like steadiness to prices, and render our markets comparatively safe against the fluctuations occasioned by an exclusive dependence upon foreign customers.

That the Government of Canada has recently resolved upon bestowing free grants of Land not exceeding one hundred acres in each section.

That there are, as your Petitioner is informed, between nine and ten million acres of Land in this Island still unlocated, and which will continue to be so for many years unless more favourable terms are offered for its occupation; and for the purpose of aiding your Honourable House to devise such measures the following suggestions are submitted for consideration:—

1. That free Grants of Land, in sections not exceeding one hundred acres, be made, conditional on personal residence for say seven years, and the clearing and cultivation of four acres per annum.
2. That during the seven years (or whatever period your Honourable House in its wisdom may determine) a quit-rent of one shilling per acre be levied, and at the expiration of that time a patent to be granted: non-fulfilment of the conditions to involve forfeiture.
3. The whole of the quit-rents to be appropriated to promoting the means of internal communication.
4. To simplify the accounts, quit-rents to be paid twelve months in advance, in all cases expiring on the 31st December; but only a moiety to be demanded of persons taking land after June in every year.
5. Lands in Townships to be sold exclusively by Public Auction, in sections of not more than half an acre each.
6. Persons desirous of purchasing country lands free of quit rent to pay at the following rates (that is to say):—for one hundred acres or under, ten shillings per acre; exceeding one hundred acres but not exceeding two hundred acres, fifteen shillings per acre; two hundred acres and upwards, one pound per acre. If more than one applicant for the same block, it should be sold by Public Auction.
7. Persons purchasing Crown Land to be entitled to the free use of adjoining Crown land (if any) for grazing purposes, in the proportion of four times the quantity purchased by them, but computed in such a manner as to prevent monopoly of water frontage; and, when required for sale or

other public purposes, to be resumable by the Crown, without compensation, upon three months' notice.

8. Two Survey Offices to be established, one at Hobart Town and the other at Launceston; and lands in the Northern and Southern districts only obtainable at their respective office.
9. Surveys to be made by the Government in advance of demand; the land to be lotted, and a chart of each District so lotted to be deposited for public inspection at the Police Office of such District; and, immediately after the sale of any lot, the name of the purchaser to be distinctly written upon the Section so located:
10. Care to be taken to equalize as nearly as possible frontages on rivers, creeks, lakes, &c.
11. Unoccupied Crown lands to be available for pastoral purposes at the annual rental of two pence per acre, payable in advance.

That the effect of such policy upon the finances of the Colony would probably be most salutary, rendering, as it would, a large extent of unoccupied and useless land populous and productive, besides enhancing the value of land already occupied. Supposing that one million acres are thus disposed of, ten thousand families, averaging probably four members each, might be introduced. Here would be an almost instantaneous addition to our population of forty thousand souls. Taking £4 per annum as the amount contributed by each under the late Tariff, there would be an augmentation of the General Revenue of £160,000, without any increase in the cost of collection. Besides which, there would be the quit-rent of one shilling per acre, amounting to £50,000, making in all an addition to the Colonial Revenue of £210,000, irrespective of the great stimulus which would be given to every department of trade by the requirements of such an augmented population. If such an arrangement were carried out, this Colony would offer a fine field to the enterprising and industrious. Land and labour, two important elements of national wealth, would be easily obtainable by all. The vigorous prosecution of public works would ensure to the artisan ample remuneration; and, next to a free grant of land, probably no greater inducement can be held out to persons desirous of emigrating than high wages and permanent employment. And, as the immigrants would pay their own passage-money, the Immigration Department might be altogether abolished, and its diminished duties transferred to the Secretary of Lands and Works, or other Minister, at the discretion of your Honourable House.

Your Petitioner therefore humbly prays that your Honourable House will take the foregoing suggestions into favourable consideration, and that such measures may be adopted for regulating the disposal of the Waste Lands of the Crown as shall promote the permanent prosperity of Tasmania.

And your Petitioner will ever pray, &c.

H. BUTTON.