

(No. 64.)



1858.

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TASMANIA.

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DEFENCES OF THE COLONY.

CORRESPONDENCE.

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Laid upon the Table by Mr. Attorney-General, and ordered by the House to be printed, 22 October, 1858.



*Government Offices, 3rd July, 1858.*

SIR,

WE have had under our consideration for some time the necessity of a combined representation from the different Colonies of Australia to the Imperial Government, setting forth that the period has now arrived at which it is imperatively necessary that measures should be taken for their protection in the event of War between the Mother Country and any other Power.

The Commerce of these Colonies, as Your Excellency is already aware, is scarcely second to that of any of the Dependencies of the British Crown. It is one in which almost exclusively British capital and industry are invested; and the character of a considerable element in it, Gold, is peculiarly liable to attract the hostile designs of an enemy.

The Australian Colonies are not, we believe, indisposed to take upon themselves a just share of liability for their own defence, and the maintenance of British supremacy; but they are now so recent in their origin, their signal advance in population and wealth has taken place within so brief a period, and their interests have been pursued hitherto so much apart from and independently of each other,—no occasion, in fact, having arisen for their co-operation in a great and common object,—that it would, we feel, be wholly misjudged were the Imperial Government to leave them to themselves in the exigency for which we wish adequate provision to be duly and promptly made. In fact, we are persuaded that, without the guidance and the fostering aid of the Mother Country, no measures calculated for a serious emergency will or can be made by these Colonies.

We would, therefore, most earnestly beg of Your Excellency to urge upon the Imperial Government to make the Australian Colonies an Admiral's Station, and that a Naval Squadron be maintained on it at least equal to that of any other Power in these seas. We need not advert to the Naval Armaments maintained in the Pacific by other Powers for the defence of their possessions, which are far less valuable and extensive than those of Great Britain.

The City of Hobart Town is so situated as to be incapable of any effectual defence otherwise than by a Naval Force. The approach to it by Storm Bay and the River Derwent is unimpeded by any difficulties of navigation; and the breadth of the river is such as to render assistance by fortifications, and more particularly such fortifications as the resources of this Colony would suffice to provide, quite hopeless. In the presence, then, of a Naval Force is the only security of the City, and thereby of the Colony. But we would nevertheless respectfully advise Your Excellency to apply to the Imperial Government for 1000 Enfield Rifles, with the necessary ammunition and equipments.

More mature deliberation and professional experience may indicate the advisability, at a future period, of steps being taken by the different Colonies of Australia which do not at present suggest themselves; but, meantime, we should feel that we exposed ourselves to a charge of dereliction in a duty, the seriousness of which may be made but too apparent we know not how soon, were we to wait supinely for some overt occasion before we sought to propitiate the care and consideration which the magnitude and the defenceless situation of these Colonies both demand.

We feel, also, that, by opening this question with the British Government and with the neighbouring Colonies, an important step will have been made towards its final and satisfactory settlement.

We would respectfully advise that Your Excellency address the Secretary of State on this subject by the first Mail; and that copies of your Despatch and of this letter accompany the communication which we have recommended to the Governors of the other Australian Colonies, should Your Excellency see fit to comply with the course we have advised.

We have, &c.

FRANCIS SMITH.  
WILLIAM HENTY.  
FRED. M. INNES.

*His Excellency the Governor.*

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*Colonial Secretary's Office, 1st October, 1858.*

SIR,

I have the honor, by direction of His Excellency the Governor, to request you will furnish a Report for the information of the Colonial Government on the following subjects connected with the Defences of the Colony :—

1st. The best method of securing the City and Shipping from the attack of an enemy.

2nd. The best disposition of the Ordnance in the possession of the Government to defend the City and Shipping in case of attack.

3rd. The expense, by Estimate, of rendering the existing Batteries thoroughly efficient, and of mounting the heavy Ordnance lately arrived therein, should such be deemed desirable.

4th. The expense, by Estimate, of erecting new Batteries, if necessary, and arming them as efficiently as the means at the disposal of the Government renders practicable.

I have the honor, &c.

WILLIAM HENTY.

*Colonel BROUGHTON, C. R. E.*

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*Commanding Royal Engineer's Office, Hobart Town, 20th October, 1858.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication, (f. 4781.) dated Colonial Secretary's Office, 1st October, 1858, calling upon me to furnish, by direction of His Excellency the Governor, a Report for the information of the Colonial Government on the several subjects indicated, and connected with the Defences of the Colony.

It is impossible, under the existing circumstances of this Garrison, to ignore the fact of the very insufficient means at our disposal of making any prolonged defence. It must be obvious that Batteries, let them be ever so well disposed or mounted, are useless without the proper proportion of Artillery to work the guns. A limited number of the Troops in Garrison are daily drilled for this service; but their number is but barely sufficient for the protection of the valuable stores belonging to the Government, and they are liable to be removed at any time. My Report must, therefore, be rather based upon what would be requisite in the event of the Batteries being completed, and the guns at our disposal mounted, with a proper proportion of Artillerymen to man them, than on the almost utter defencelessness of the Colony as at present subsisting. Bearing this in mind, I proceed to state that the existing defences consist of the Prince of Wales Battery constructed for 10 guns; a 4-gun Battery immediately above the same at Battery Point; a 3-gun Battery near the old Government House; and a Battery for 12 guns in the Domain. All these Batteries I consider well placed, but requiring repair and modification, which I shall revert to hereafter. In considering any defence for this Colony, it is impossible to divest one's mind of the necessity of connecting it with that of the other Colonies of

Australia. The most obvious would be to make Melbourne an Admiral's Station, with a sufficient number of vessels to enable a Steam Frigate or gun boats to be constantly in this harbour and at Sydney. I say at Melbourne as being the most central position, but there may be other causes which might make Sydney or Hobart Town more desirable as the Head Quarters for a Fleet.

The guns at our command, inclusive of those lately received from England, are as follows:—10 8-inch guns, 20 32-pounders, 4 24-pounder brass howitzers, and a few light field-pieces. Of these I should propose 4 32-pounders should be made available for Launceston, leaving the remainder to be distributed in the several Batteries already constructed here. To work these guns it will be absolutely necessary to have at least one Company of Artillery quartered in the Colony. Any attempt to defend a place with heavy guns without an Artilleryman would be preposterous. Situated as this harbour is, its great breadth and depth of water on all sides, I am not prepared to recommend other defences than those which embrace the Town and anchorage, involving as they would a large expenditure with questionable results, and necessitating an increased force of Artillerymen.

The repairs and modifications I should propose are, first, to place the present Batteries in an effective state, and to modify the lower Battery called the Prince of Wales (which I should propose to entirely remodel); and to erect a 2-gun Battery on Perry's ground. The expense of the former would not exceed £350, of the second £800, and the latter about £250.

If the Batteries and platforms are maintained in a serviceable condition, I think it would not be necessary to mount the guns lately arrived, which, from having wooden carriages, would be better kept in store until wanted.

It will be understood these estimates have been formed for civil free labour, which is enormous in this Colony. If Convict labour was made available, a very large deduction would necessarily follow. It will also be observed that I have not entered on the subject of the probable nature of any attack that might be made by a Foreign Power, as the subject has been fully discussed in Sir William Denison's Minute of April 1854, with which I entirely concur.

The cost of repairing the present Battery at Launceston would be about £40, and to erect a 2-gun Battery in addition at the same place about £250.

I have, &c.

W. E. DELVES BROUGHTON,  
*Colonel Commanding Royal Engineers.*

*The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.*