

(No. 89.)



1878.

T A S M A N I A.
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BILL:

PETITION FROM ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, HOBART TOWN.

Presented by Mr. Crowther, September 27; and ordered by the Council to be printed, October 15, 1878.



*To the Honorable the President and Members of the Legislative Council in
Parliament assembled.*

The Petition of the undersigned being Members of the Church of Scotland, and Seatholders in, or Adherents of, St. Andrew's, Hobart Town.

HUMBLY SHOWETH:

THAT your Petitioners have been informed that a Bill professing to provide for the future regulation and management of the affairs of the Presbyterian Church, now and heretofore recognised and known as the Church of Scotland and a branch of that Church in Tasmania, is now before your Honorable House.

That your Petitioners, being satisfied that this Bill, if passed into law, even in its original form, would have the effect of separating the branch of the Church of Scotland so long established in this Colony from the parent Church, and from the protection of its laws and government, and that it was intended by its promoters so to do, petitioned the House of Assembly to exempt them and the properties belonging to the congregation of St. Andrew's from its action, and to appropriate to their use and that of their successors a portion at least of the Debentures granted under the Commutation Act for the religious uses of Members of the Church of Scotland within the Colony. And your Petitioners have learned with a strong feeling of injured justice that the Bill has been presented to your Honorable House in such a form as to compel your Petitioners either to leave the Church of Scotland or to leave the Church of St. Andrew's. That your Petitioners have also ascertained, and with something more than astonishment, that this Bill as in its revised form before your Honorable House, is now so framed in its third section as to vest the appointing and dismissing of trustees for all congregational properties in those who are to constitute the future governing authority; and they have to inform your Honorable House that this is in direct violation of the decision of the conference held at Campbell Town; in violation of the unanimous decision of the congregations of the Church to whom the Bill was submitted in draft; in violation of the decision of the Presbytery when the Bill was finally approved by them; and in violation of the Bill as submitted by the promoters to the House of Assembly and printed for the Members of that House;—the draft Bill in that its original form securing to the several congregations the right of electing and removing their own trustees. And your Petitioners have to state that this change in the Bill has been effected by the removing from it of the section as settled and agreed on, and by the inserting of a section which had been finally and decisively rejected by all the parties interested in this legislation; and that this change has been made without their knowledge or sanction.

Your Petitioners have also to inform your Honorable House that a small tract named the "Form of Presbyterian Church Government"—a book neither framed nor accepted by the Church to which they belong—has been introduced in this revised Bill in Sect. 5, lines 53 and 54, as a standard of law, without the knowledge or consent of the congregations interested; and that the effect of this is to deprive the congregations of the constitutional right of electing and calling their own Ministers, and to vest in the governing authority the legal right of presentation and patronage.

Your Petitioners have therefore to impress on your Honorable House that the petitions presented in favour of the Bill have been for the passing of the same as it was approved by the congregations and finally left the hands of the Presbytery: that no petition has been presented in its favour in the altered form in which it is now before the Legislative Council; and that no petition in favour of this new legislation has emanated from persons in the Colony who have declared themselves to be members of the Church of Scotland, and who were returned as such under the last census.

Your Petitioners having petitioned to be heard at the bar of the House of Assembly for their interests and the interests of the Church and congregation with which they are connected, and petitioned in vain, appeal now to your Honorable House to protect them against an attempted act of grievous injustice; and respectfully crave that, if this Bill is to pass in any shape, it may be so modified in terms of the amendments hereunto subjoined or otherwise as to provide that the Church, Manse, and Glebe of St. Andrew's, Hobart Town, shall be vested permanently in trust, as hitherto they have been under the Church Act, for "a congregation of Presbyterians in connection with the Church of Scotland as by law established." That a fair proportion of the Debentures allotted under "The State Aid Commutation Act" to the members of the Church of Scotland in the Colony shall be settled as a permanent endowment for the benefit of this congregation; and that the salary and allowance payable to the Rev. John Storie shall be paid to him so long as he continues to act as Minister of St. Andrew's, out of the Colonial Treasury direct.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

[Here follow 359 Signatures.]

JAMES BARNARD,
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.