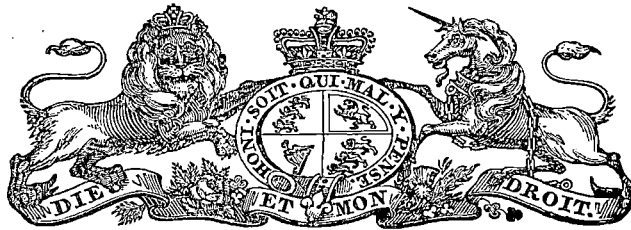


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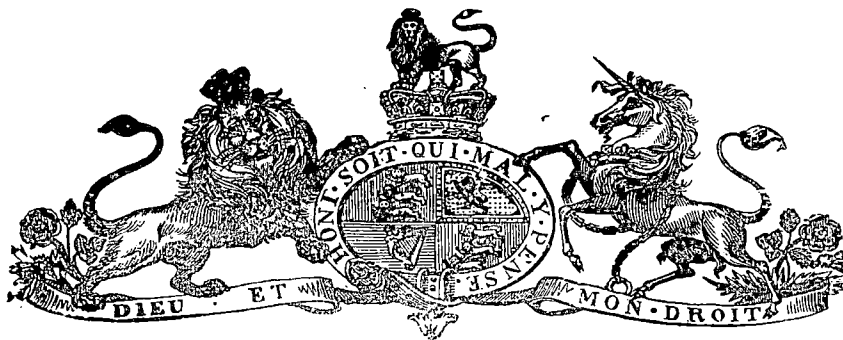
1886.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:

MEMORANDUM OF CHIEF SECRETARY.

Laid upon the Table by Dr. Agnew, and ordered by the Legislative Council
to be printed, November 23, 1886.



EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

MEMORANDUM OF CHIEF SECRETARY.

Charge of tyranny, &c. against the Director, in the Hamilton-on-Forth case.

The circumstances in Mr. Gregory's case are fully detailed in the correspondence which has been laid before Parliament. His removal from the Forth had been decided on by the late Board of Education, and was only deferred pending the occurrence of a suitable vacancy. Having made a report to the Minister in connection with the erection of some fence about which nothing was known in the Education Office, he was requested to send up a rough sketch of the ground showing position of proposed fence. This was on the 19th March. On the 24th March he replied that the Inspector could furnish the information. On the 2nd April the Minister directed him to furnish the sketch plan at once. No reply having been received up to the 17th April, the Minister directed him to be informed that if an explanation was not sent by return of post he would be liable to suspension. On the 22nd April, no reply of any kind having been received, the Minister ordered him to be suspended from the discharge of duty. On the 27th April a letter was received, in which the instructions issued by the Minister were still ignored. A subsequent letter was received, in which, though not giving an explanation, he appeared to recognise the Minister's authority; and the Director, the Minister being then absent, felt himself justified in temporarily reinstating Mr. Gregory in his office as teacher after a week's suspension. To prevent the deprivation of office from running into another week it was decided to notify the re-instatement by telegraph, and in order to avoid any mention of the penalty which the Minister had imposed, the Director referred to it in his telegram as a leave of absence from duty. On the Minister's return to Hobart he went fully into the whole case. No satisfactory explanation was yet forthcoming, but the Director recommended leniency, and the Minister settled the matter by giving effect to the decision of the Board of Education, and transferring him to the charge of a smaller school.

Railway Passes to School Children.

As regards a complaint made respecting the action of the Director of Education in this matter, it is enough to state that the section of the Education Act under which alone the free passes could be issued contains a proviso that the school to which the children go must be "the nearest by railway to the residence of the parents;" that it was discovered that certain children were attending the Longford school whose home was several miles nearer to another State school, both by railway and by road; that the teacher's certificate, produced to justify the issue of free passes, states what was directly contrary to the fact; and that it was not until special regulations had been made by the Governor in Council to modify the terms of the Act that it was possible to issue free passes in this particular case without a violation of the law.

Charges to the effect that a preference over Teachers already in the service has been given to strangers arriving in the Colony from England or elsewhere.

The invariable reply to strangers applying for employment under the Department since the present permanent head has been in charge is, that the Minister cannot appoint them to any schools which are important enough to be desired by competent teachers already in the service, and that the only openings for which they are eligible are in outlying country schools from which teachers have been promoted, or which are otherwise vacant. In some cases advantage has been taken of the arrival of teachers with good credentials to fill up casual vacancies in large schools that have occurred through the death, illness, or resignation of teachers or pupil teachers. In all such cases the persons thus temporarily employed have been distinctly informed by the Director that they are engaged as temporary assistants only, and that their employment gives them no claim to any permanent appointment.

A vacancy occurred some time ago in the Murray-street School, in the post of Infant Teacher, which it was difficult to fill, the imperfect means of training in the Colony providing no teachers properly qualified for such duties. A trained and experienced teacher, with special qualifications for this kind of work, was a candidate for temporary employment, and was at first offered work at the Murray-street School. Finding, however, that a better provisional arrangement for securing her services in a larger school, the Minister decided to place her in the Trinity Hill School, transferring from thence, with a slight rise in salary, an ex-pupil teacher employed as temporary assistant. Both were informed that this was a provisional arrangement, and that no guarantee of permanent employment could be given.

Under the same head come certain statements that appear to have been made respecting an appointment to a school at Maria Island. The facts are as follow :—

The vacancy at Maria Island having been advertised, six applications were received by the Minister. Of the six applicants two only had had any experience as teachers, and of these two only one had had charge of a school. This was a trained and certificated teacher from England, with very good credentials, who was employed as a temporary assistant in the place of a pupil teacher recently deceased. The other was an ex-pupil teacher of very good promise, who was also acting as temporary assistant. The ex-pupil teacher, though submitting his services to the disposal of the Minister, had intimated that he desired to remain in his present position up to the end of the year. The Minister, under the circumstances, decided to confer the vacant appointment upon the only other candidate who was qualified to take sole charge of a school.

All the action taken by the Director in any of the foregoing cases has been either under the instruction or with the special approval of the Minister of Education.

Exception has been taken to the delay in the appointment of Boards of Advice. Impending changes in the Ministry prevented this question from receiving, during the first few months of the year, the consideration which its importance demanded. When the general principle of the arrangements required to give effect to the intention of the Education Act had been decided upon, immediate steps were taken to have School Districts proclaimed, and the necessary preliminary steps taken for the appointment of the Boards. One only of the Municipal Councils has declined to undertake the duties, and in that district other arrangements are being made. In all the Police Districts inquiry has been made from persons competent to advise on the subject, and invitations are sent out as rapidly as the nomination of suitable persons allows.

The absence of any provision for the performance of their duties by Boards of Advice, which is expected to cost £2500 a year, will prevent them from coming into active operation until the beginning of next year, but in the meantime their suggestions are invited in regard to any matters connected with the schools; and the delay which has unavoidably occurred has been of valuable service in leading to the discovery of grave defects in the old system of Local School Boards, which will be effectually remedied to a large extent when the new system is fully established.

J. W. AGNEW.

23rd November, 1886.