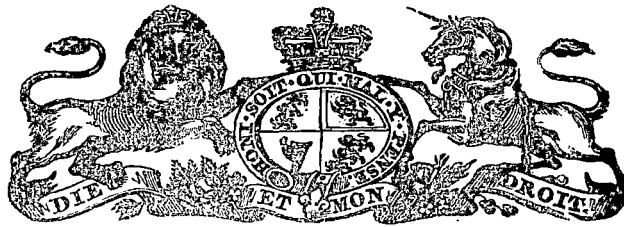


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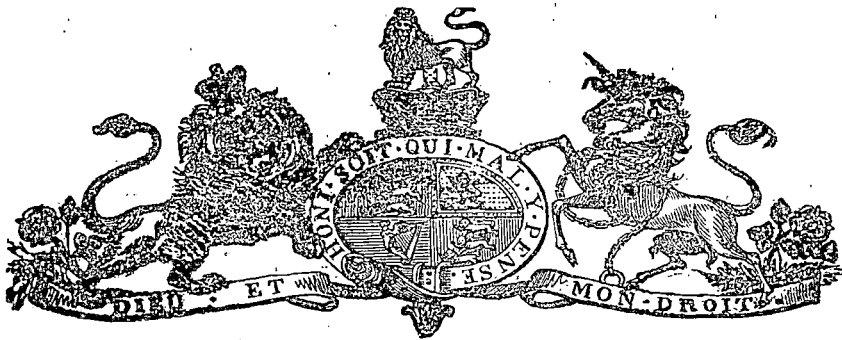
1884.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

**LAUNCESTON AND WESTERN RAILWAY
COMPANY (LIMITED) :**

PETITION FOR REPAYMENT OF £50,000 ALLEGED TO
BE DUE.

Presented by the Premier ; and ordered by the House to be printed, July 16, 1884.



To His Excellency SIR G. C. STRAHAN, K.C.M.G., Governor-in-Chief
of Tasmania, &c.

The Petition of the undersigned Colonists residing in the Launceston and Western Railway District of
Tasmania aforesaid—

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH:

1. THAT Petitioners represent a body of about 330 residents of the aforesaid districts, associated under the title of the Launceston and Western Railway Company (Limited).

2. That in the year 1857 the question of introducing Railway communication into the aforesaid districts had assumed serious importance, from the bad condition of the roads between "the Westward" and the port of Launceston, and the extension of Railways in Victoria, then the principal market for our agricultural produce; and that at a large district meeting held in the Court House at Launceston on the 27th of August of that year, presided over by the Mayor of Launceston, the following Resolutions were adopted, and were transmitted to the Government:—

"That this meeting, impressed with the importance of the speedy and economical transit of produce intended for shipment to the neighbouring colonies, is desirous that a Railway should be constructed with all possible expedition through the agricultural districts of Morven, Longford, Westbury, and Deloraine."

"That the Local Government should be at once moved to take steps for the construction of a line of Railway, with termini at Launceston and Deloraine, it having been shewn by authentic returns that there would soon be sufficient revenue to render remunerative the expenditure of £500,000 on such a Railway."

"That in the opinion of this meeting, the *Local Government* should undertake the construction of Railways in Tasmania, because they would pass over and near a considerable breadth of public land; the Parliamentary proceedings would cost less; capital might be borrowed on more advantageous terms; and as the existing roads were paid for, the fares might be reduced, or the surplus income devoted to the extension of lines." [Instead of going to speculators.]

3. That in the year 1858 a report by a Joint Committee of the Houses of Parliament, practically rejecting the resolution of the meeting aforesaid,—namely, that the Local Government should undertake the making of Railways in Tasmania,—declared for *district liability*, in the following significant clauses:—

"The construction and maintenance of Railways and Tramways should be undertaken *by the districts through which they pass*; while Parliament should sanction the raising of the required funds by the guarantee of the Government, or by the issue of Debentures * * * the Government being indemnified by security upon the revenue of the railway, and *guarantee by assessment of the lands of the districts*: * * * The Committee believe that the time has already arrived when Parliament might, *with great advantage to the Colony*, initiate some GENERAL measure in accordance with the views herein expressed: * * * and recommend that an Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor praying that he will be pleased to direct that a Bill may be introduced into Parliament at an early period of the next Session under which Road Districts or Municipalities might constitute themselves a Railway District, and secure the advantage of the Government guarantee, upon their willingness to render the Railway Revenues *and the lands of the District liable as security* for the capital and expense incurred in the construction of the Railway or Tramway, and the interest thereon."

4. That, in 1859, the Governor's speech on the opening of Parliament contained the following:—
"My Government, not unmindful of the recommendation of the two Houses of Parliament of last Session, has, during the recess, carefully deliberated on the question of introducing a Railway Bill; but it is impressed with the opinion that any legislation on Railways *must be SPECIAL*, and not GENERAL in the first instance; and also that a general agreement is necessary *on the part of those interested in such undertakings* as to their expediency, and the means by which they are to be accomplished; and are unwilling to propose the guarantee of the Government to any scheme until those whose property would be benefited by it *have first given satisfactory evidence of their own assurance in its feasibility and financial soundness*.

5. That in the year 1865 the first Railway Bill passed into law (29 Vict. No. 24,) based on the principles thus laid down by the Government and Legislature, which Bill provided for a poll of the ratepayers of the district aforesaid; that such poll was taken on the 18th December, 1865, and resulted in favor of the principles of the Bill by 2238 affirmative votes against 564 negative votes; that the said Bill provided machinery for the levying a rate on the district in event of any failure in the payment of interest on money proposed to be advanced by the Government; and further enacted that the people of the districts should subscribe £100,000 (afterwards reduced to £50,000) towards construction, as a further test of their confidence "in the feasibility and financial soundness" of the scheme.

6. That, relying on the *bona fides* of the Legislature and of the ratepayers thus so emphatically pledged, and to prevent further delay in the introduction of the Railway to the said districts, which question had been then debated in and out of Parliament for the long period of eight years, petitioners advanced the £50,000 claimed as aforesaid, which sum was duly spent on the construction of the line, as provided by the Statute, under the direction of Commissioners appointed by the Crown; and the said Railway and works on which these moneys were so expended are now held by the Government on behalf of the Colony, subject only to a statutory lien in favour of Petitioners on the future earnings of the line.

7. That Petitioners advanced this money in the belief that the Railway policy of the Government would continue to be that imposed on these districts; but that, in the instance of the Mersey district and of the Main Line, and now in respect to the various lines proposed, the principle of local responsibility has been altogether abandoned.

8. That, further, under the provisions of the Waste Lands Act of this Colony, Petitioners are entitled, subject to Parliamentary Resolutions, to a grant of public land. That, under these provisions, on the 7th of September, 1865, Parliament authorised such a grant to the Directors of the Mersey and Deloraine Tramway Company, in the proportion of 1280 acres for every mile of Tramway constructed between Latrobe and Deloraine; and although the line was never taken nearer than within 13 miles of that terminus, the Directors did actually receive TWENTY-SIX THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED ACRES of Crown land, which they were permitted to select in sections (the better to secure good quality) for the remaining 17 miles of the line, commencing at Latrobe; these works being subsequently taken over by Government, and paid for out of the public revenues of the Colony.

9. That the great benefits which have accrued to the districts aforesaid, and indirectly to the Colony at large, from the Launceston and Western Railway aforesaid, is now fully admitted by our Legislators and the people generally, as is evidenced by the growing desire for Railway extension into other districts of the Colony; and Your Excellency's Petitioners respectfully claim credit for having been instrumental in securing these benefits, and awakening public interest on the Railway question, by their voluntary advance of the Fifty Thousand Pounds expended as aforesaid, and now represented in the substantial works constituting the said Launceston and Western Railway.

10. That many of your Petitioners have been inconvenienced in business by the withdrawal of the sums which they so paid towards the construction of this public work. That, in addition to loss of interest during a period of about thirteen years (and when good opportunities have existed for profitable investment), they have borne, equally with their fellow colonists, the burden, in the first instance, of a District Railway Rate, and subsequently of the Real Estates Duty,—burdens which have seemed the greater because of the Government having now abandoned the principle of *local* liability enforced in the case of the Launceston and Western District.

11. That a sense of injustice has, in consequence, been experienced by the Northern Colonists, and especially by Petitioners, whose contributions were made solely for the purpose of promoting Railway communication so long sought for, by fulfilling the condition imposed by the Legislature on the aforesaid district, and not with any view to personal profit or advantage, beyond that which is common to the whole community, of which Petitioners form but a small proportion.

Your Excellency's Petitioners therefore pray that, for these and other valid reasons, and in lieu of such statutory lien as aforesaid, Your Excellency will be pleased to recommend the Legislature to provide for the repayment to the Launceston and Western Railway Company (Limited) of the said sum of £50,000, by the issue of Debentures, payable in the year 1903, or at such other date as to Your Excellency may seem meet, with 4 per cent. interest thereon, payable half-yearly at the Treasury, Hobart.

And Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

[Here follow Signatures.]