

(No. 43.)



1864.

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T A S M A N I A.

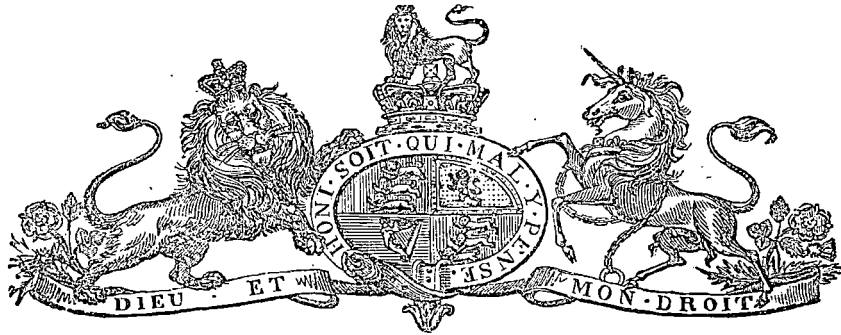
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P E T I T I O N No. 4.

FOR LOWERING THE MUNICIPAL ELECTORS' QUALIFICATION.

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Presented by Mr. James Lord, and ordered by the House to be printed,  
21 July, 1864.



*To the Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly of Tasmania,  
in Parliament assembled.*

The humble Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of the Rural Municipality of Oatlands.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH :

THAT your Petitioners crave permission to draw the attention of your Honorable House to the Sixth Section of the "Rural Municipalities Act" of the said Colony, which enacts that "all men of the age of twenty-one years, whose names are on the Valuation Roll as proprietors or occupiers of property within the Rural Municipality of the annual value of not less than Fifteen Pounds, shall be Municipal Electors of such Municipality."

That your Petitioners beg leave to solicit the attention of your Honorable House also to a quotation from the Seventeenth Section of "The Constitutional Act" of Tasmania, which, amongst other things, provides that "every man of the age of twenty-one, being a householder occupying any house of the clear annual value of Ten Pounds, or holding a licence to depasture lands and paying for the same not less than Ten Pounds per annum, or having a leasehold estate in possession of the annual value of Ten Pounds, shall be entitled to vote at the election of a Member of the House of Assembly."

That, looking at the two Sections above named, your Petitioners perceive a most strange peculiarity in the law as contained in such legislative enactments, in that by the latter the elective franchise for a Member of the Senate is conferred upon a householder, the holder of a depasture licence, and a leaseholder of the yearly value of Ten Pounds; whereas, by the former, the right to vote for candidates for election as Municipal Councillors is fixed at the minimum annual value of Fifteen Pounds.

That, by the Municipal Law of this Colony, therefore, all proprietors and occupiers of property of Ten, Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen, and even Fourteen Pounds Nineteen Shillings and Sixpence per annum are deprived of the Municipal Franchise, and are consequently reduced to absolute ciphers, albeit they are locally assessed for the purposes of the Civic Institution of the Municipality, without having any voice in the election of Councillors.

That your Petitioners deem such proscriptions of the proprietors and occupiers of property from Ten to Fifteen Pounds per annum as unfair and unjust, and especially considering that among such may be found equal intelligence, uprightness, respect for the laws and the constituted authorities of the community, as may distinguish those Municipal Electors the annual value of whose property graduate from Fifteen to Five hundred Pounds, as set forth in the scale to the 18th Section of "The Rural Municipalities Act" referred to.

That your Petitioners think that the voting power should not be so restricted, but be more fairly and equitably balanced than it is; since, according to the present law, one Municipal Elector, who happens to be the occupier or the proprietor of property of the annual value of Four hundred and fifty Pounds, is entitled to no less than Ten Votes for each Candidate for a Municipal Councillor; whereas it requires ten Municipal Electors who are rated from Fifteen to Fifty Pounds per annum to cope with that single one. It is therefore manifest that the voting power is given to the large propertied classes to an unequal and injurious extent; inasmuch as, in point of representation, the voters between Fifteen and Fifty Pounds, who have only one vote, are sheer nonentities in a Municipality.

That in communities of dense populations the injustice of the anomalies pointed out by your Petitioners might not be felt; but in the Municipalities of Tasmania, thinly populated as they are,

the deprivation of the franchise, as shown by your Petitioners, operates with peculiar hardship, and indeed positive injustice, to the disqualified Ratepayers.

Your Petitioners humbly pray that your Honorable House will be pleased to take the premises into consideration, with the view of lowering the qualification of Municipal Electors to Ten Pounds per annum, as in the case of Electors for Members of your Honorable House, so that the present Municipally disfranchised may be endowed with the privilege of being enfranchised, and thus a voice given to them in matters relating to local self-government.

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

*[Here follow 84 Signatures.]*