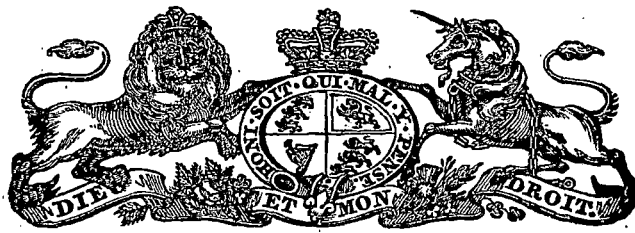


(No. 124.)



1884.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

CALIFORNIAN THISTLE ACT:

REPORT OF CHIEF INSPECTOR.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



REPORT on the working of the Californian Thistle Act, 1883.

Office of Inspector of Sheep, Hobart, 3rd August, 1884.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit the following Report for the information of the Government on the working of "The Californian Thistle Act."

This Act, as you will recollect, came into operation on 29th October last. I thereupon gave my Inspectors instructions to report on their several districts to what extent these thistles existed, and to take immediate steps to carry out the provisions of the Act, by giving the necessary notice to the parties on whose lands the thistle was found.

The Inspectors in the Northern portion of the Island reported a few small patches only in different parts of their districts, but in most of the districts south of Oatlands I regret to say the reports made to me were very unfavourable, the cultivated lands in the Districts of Clarence, Richmond, Brighton, and Glenorchy being greatly overrun with this tenacious weed. This large area is wholly under the supervision of Inspector Thomas A. Tabart at present, as it is within his Sheep District.

Owing to the carelessness or possibly, in many cases, the want of capital on the part of occupiers (mostly tenant farmers), this thistle is increasing to a very serious extent. It is allowed to grow with the crop year after year unchecked, and the seed is in this way spread far and wide.

I have given the subject much attention, and, I regret to say, have come to the conclusion that the only way to clear land from this thistle is to lay it down in grass. The thistles could then be cut down or nipped by any live stock, and thus be prevented from going to seed.

I would also direct attention to the fact that there is no minimum penalty for neglecting to cut down thistles, and prosecutions under the Act in consequence are but little heeded by those who almost habitually disregard it. How can it be otherwise when an occupier of land has been convicted three times, and on no occasion has he been fined more than Five Shillings!

Forty-six convictions have been obtained under the Act, the total amount of fines inflicted being £24 10s., one-half of which were fines of Five shillings and two of Two shillings and sixpence each. I do not hesitate to say that unless the Act is amended in this respect no permanent benefit will be derived from its operation.

It is also desirable that the Act be amended in respect to proof of occupancy. I would suggest that production of the Assessment Roll be *prima facie* evidence of occupancy, and that it would then be for the defendant to show that he was not in occupation of the land.

In conclusion, I beg to draw your attention to the inadequate sum set apart to defray the expenses entailed by the Act for the current year; also to the great difficulty experienced by the inspecting staff in carrying out its provisions in conjunction with their other duties. For instance, 601 inspections were made in his district by Inspector Thomas A. Tabart during the months of November, December, January, February, and March, a laborious task involving an expenditure of much time. I earnestly recommend to the consideration of the Government the advisability of placing £200 at the least on the Estimates for extra inspection during the summer months.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. HARRISON, *Chief Inspector.*

The Honorable the Chief Secretary.