

(No. 28.)



1869.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

DISTRIBUTION OF TROOPS.

DESPATCH FROM SECRETARY OF STATE.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Wilson, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
August 24, 1869.



TASMANIA.
No. 31.

Downing-street, 25th March, 1869.

SIR,

HER Majesty's Government have had recently under their consideration the distribution of Her Majesty's Troops among the British Colonies, and the rate of contribution to be paid to the Imperial Exchequer by the Colonies in which they are placed.

They have come to the conclusion that the Force at present so stationed is capable of considerable reduction; and such a reduction is almost forced upon them in the case of Australia by the total withdrawal of Her Majesty's Troops from New Zealand, which renders it no longer possible to station the detached Wing of a Regiment in Continental Australia.

Orders have therefore been given to withdraw from Australia all the Infantry in excess of a single Regiment.

In the distribution of that Regiment it is the desire of Her Majesty's Government to consult the convenience of the different Colonies so far as is consistent with the requirements of military discipline. I shall gladly receive any information from you which, after consultation with the neighbouring Governments, you think likely to assist me in effecting this object. In the decision which I am forced to adopt without such consultation, I have considered the probable desires of the different Colonial Governments as well as I can, subject to any reconsideration which further information may render expedient. Her Majesty's Government have decided that the Head Quarters of the Australian Command should remain in Victoria, where it is at present, but the Head Quarters of the Regiment at Sydney, where the largest number of Infantry will continue to be stationed.

The allotment of Troops will be as follows:—

New South Wales	4 Companies.
Victoria	2 Companies.
South Australia	2 Companies.
Queensland	1 Company.
Tasmania.....	1 Company.

A Battery of Artillery will remain at Sydney, and if the Victorian Government should wish it, another Battery will be sent to Melbourne.

All these Troops will, for the present, be paid for at the rate now agreed on. But you must be aware that this rate must be considered temporary. The principle that the Colonies should pay the full expense of their own Military Defence must now be considered as established in general, and it is actually applied to the Crown Colonies of Ceylon and the Straits Settlements. No reason can be alleged why it should not be equally applied to the flourishing Colonies of Australia. And I think it necessary to inform you that a careful inquiry will shortly be instituted into the expense of the Troops employed in the different British Possessions, with the object of ascertaining a rate of Colonial payment which will cover the full cost of these Troops. You may therefore, at no distant period, expect a proposal founded on this enquiry; and it will be for the Australian Colonies to consider whether or not it is worth their while to pay this increased cost for the presence of a small body of Her Majesty's Troops.

In any such consideration it must be remembered that no fraction of a Regiment can be allotted to Australia ; and that at least four Companies must be stationed in one of the principal Cities where there is adequate Barrack accommodation. I also desire you to inform your Government that, whether or not the Colonies should be willing to pay the increased cost of these Troops, and able to come to any such understanding as would enable Her Majesty's Government to station a Regiment in Australia, the Secretary of State for War will afford them all possible assistance for the employment, at their own expense, of such commissioned and non-commissioned Officers, whether of Cavalry, Artillery, or Infantry, as they may find useful for organising and instructing any Local Force which they may choose to maintain, for the construction, inspection, or maintenance of Fortifications, or for any other matter connected with Military Defence. The War Department will also be ready, when practicable, to furnish them at cost price with such Arms, Ammunition, or Military Stores as they may need ; and in case the Colony should desire to employ any well-conducted Privates in their Police Force, about their Works of Defence, or indeed in any employment under Government, Soldiers will be allowed to quit the Service for such purpose under Regulations of which I enclose a copy.

Lastly, I have to state the opinion of Her Majesty's Government that the period is at hand at which Tasmania should cease to enjoy the advantage hitherto conceded of receiving the services of Her Majesty's Troops without payment. The new arrangement will therefore apply to that Island ; and the Government of Tasmania should become a party to any consultation which may take place on the future arrangements for the Military Defence of the Australian Colonies.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

GRANVILLE.

Governor DU CANE.