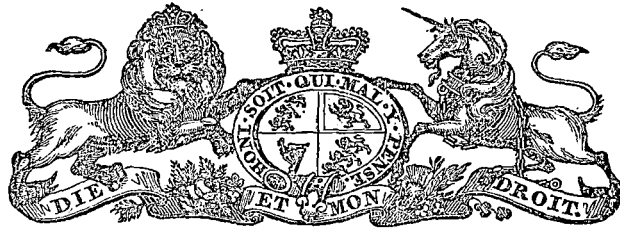


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1867.

T A S M A N I A.

S U R V E Y O F F I C E.

LETTER FROM THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL TO THE HON.
COLONIAL TREASURER.

Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be
printed, 1 October, 1867.



Survey Office, 28th September, 1867.

SIR,

I VERY respectfully take leave to offer you some remarks on a Report which appeared in the *Mercury* of Thursday, the 19th instant, of the debate that took place in the House of Assembly on the preceding day on the Land Fund Supplementary Estimates for 1866, and on your proposal to expend £2000 on cutting tracks through Crown Lands, when, if the Report may be relied on, some statements were made which were incorrect. That this occurred either through misconception of facts, or misinformation respecting details, I most willingly believe. I, however, think it due to this Department, which has been so severely assailed for a presumed excess in its authorised expenditure, to place before you a few facts connected therewith, which will invest the case with an entirely different appearance from that which it is made to wear at present.

The amount that it is contended we ought not to have spent is £2194 7s. ; and, judging from the Report, Honorable Members must have been under the idea that this sum was disbursed for surveys alone. But when some of the items of which it is made up, such as clerical assistance, fuel, light, furniture, &c. are subtracted from it, the amount paid for surveys is reduced to £1874 18s. 8d., the whole of which, and almost exactly £421 more, were actually collected in this Office on account of survey fees during the year. Thus it will be seen that though we spent more than the Parliamentary Grant in 1866 (under Executive authority), we collected the money ourselves to meet it,—so the Revenue lost nothing by it.

Before going further, I will here take leave to say that the order under which we were acting at the time this expenditure was incurred, was that which directed us to put up as large an amount of Crown Lands as possible for sale; and to secure the survey in advance of lands in various localities with the least possible delay; which order remained in force, though not quite continuously, till the end of last year, the periods of its suspension amounting in the aggregate to eight or nine months.

I will here beg to assure you that during the rule of a former Ministry we were empowered to disburse whatever sums we collected on account of surveys over and above the Parliamentary Grants*,—though, of course, this was never done except on the authority of the Governor in Council.

In thus putting up to sale the large quantities of land that we have surveyed (and for which this Department is now so severely blamed), it will be seen that we have done no more than we have been ordered to do, and which we could not therefore avoid.

That the system of putting up such large quantities of land for sale is a defective one may be true, but this was not a matter for this Department to determine on, its only business being to see that it was done, if such were the will of the Government. But in justice to it I must here state, that while the instruction above referred to gave it something very like unlimited authority in the matter of making surveys, it still acted with great prudence and caution in carrying it out, never cutting up any lands thus speculatively the leases of which had not quite run out; and these were the lands selected for speculative surveys, almost without exception, and were chosen without reference to the District Surveyors, who any one reading the Report would think made the choice themselves.

That a Department should be assailed as this is on almost every occasion of the assembling of Parliament for obeying orders, is certainly a somewhat strange way of treating it. If it did otherwise than obey, I should feel no surprise at these never-ending censures. But I must confess that, when they are thus periodically cast on us for fulfilling our instructions, I cannot so readily understand their justice.

* In 1863 the Parliamentary Grant was not exceeded, but in 1864, '65, and '66 it was; and then we received the Governor's authority to expend the survey fees we had collected in each year under the following dates: 15th September, 1864; 13th October, 1865; and 16th April, 1866, to which I refer you.

According to the *Mercury* Report, it would seem that some other charges, both general and specific, were made against it during the debate. To any general charge a reply can seldom be given, owing to its very indefiniteness, which renders it almost intangible. Such of them, however, as charge it with extravagance and waste are perhaps best met by reference to what has been precedingly said, namely, that its expenditure resulted from orders with which it had nothing to do but to obey: and if those that tax it with being loose, lax, and dissatisfactory have relation to what has been said just before,—namely, that our system is to permit the Surveyors to measure lands just where they choose,—I must then take leave to assure you that no such system ever prevailed, for they derive their orders from this Office, where their instructions are cut out for them.

Of specific charges there seems to be but one, namely, that which taxes some Surveyor with having palmed off on this Office fictitious surveys of places on which he had never set his foot, but had marked out the boundaries by description. With this statement I regret I am unable to deal just now, having submitted the accusation to yourself on the 20th instant, that you might obtain me some further information thereon, such indeed as would enable me to investigate the matter, so that the result, if the charge proved to be true, might carry punishment home to the offending Surveyor.

With reference to the statements made about the mismanagement of this Department, by reason of Surveyors being permitted to do their work pretty much as they like,—they are not borne out by facts; but that a very tight hand is kept over them, is. But if it ever happen that they do succeed in deceiving me, it must be that the system of Field Inspection, which I introduced, has been destroyed, greatly against my wish.

With regard to the statements reported in the *Mercury* to have been uttered against this Department when you proposed to expend £2000 in opening tracks through crown lands, that a most wasteful expenditure of funds has taken place once before through this Department, whereof £10,000 have been injudiciously expended in Devon, I beg to state that it had nothing at all to do with these roads beyond this, that some of them were laid out by the District Surveyors. The whole of the money that was disbursed in Devon on account of these roads was expended by a Board, with which this Department, by some strange misconception, is always confounded. By desire of this Board some of its roads were surveyed by it, but it did nothing more in the matter. That it performed this duty well is proved by the Report of the gentleman who was officially deputed by the Board to inspect them (Mr. Tully), of which the following is an extract:—"Without one exception the roads in both Dorset and Devon were marked out in the most careful and creditable manner."

With these explanations, respectfully supplied to the Executive, I hope steps may be taken to vindicate this Department from the charges made against it.

I remain,
Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

J. E. CALDER.

The Honorable Colonial Treasurer.