

(No. 113.)



1888.

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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

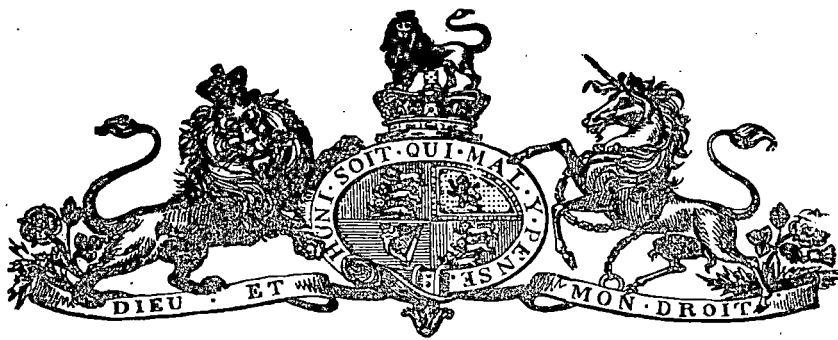
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NEW GUINEA PROTECTORATE :

MEMORANDUM RESPECTING THE POSITION OF TASMANIA  
IN REGARD TO LIABILITY FOR CONTRIBUTIONS.

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



*MEMORANDUM respecting the position of Tasmania in regard to liability for Contributions to the Expense of maintaining the New Guinea Protectorate.*

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AN article in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, of the 27th November, 1882, recommending the annexation of New Guinea by Germany, was brought under the notice of the Tasmanian Government by the Council of the Royal Colonial Institute, from which Society a Memorial had been forwarded to the Secretary of State, strongly advocating the establishment of British protection over the eastern half of that Island.

13th Dec.,  
1882.  
Parliamentary  
Paper, H.A.,  
No. 46, of  
1883.

The Premier of the day, the Hon. W. R. Giblin, endorsed a Minute on this communication to the effect that, as "the position of Tasmania is so remote, and its interest so indirect, I do not think we should intervene in any attempt to put pressure on the English Government in favour of the annexation of New Guinea." The Hon. W. Moore (Chief Secretary), in replying to the Council of the Royal Colonial Institute, stated, however, that "this Government coincides in the views of the other Australian Colonies as regards the importance of securing and maintaining the supremacy of Great Britain in New Guinea."

5th Feb., 1883.

25th May,  
1883.

Communications passed between the Premier of Victoria and the Tasmanian Government in June and July, 1883, on the question of representations to the Imperial Government respecting the establishment of their claims over New Guinea, and in the earlier stages of this correspondence the Premier expressed the views that "any cost attending the maintenance of order in any islands which the British Government might think proper to take possession of should be borne by the particular Colony to which they might be attached, and which would reap any commercial or fiscal advantage which might hereafter accrue from the annexation;" and, "as at present advised, I could not recommend the Government of this Colony to accept any share of such a responsibility."

29th June,  
1883.

Subsequently, Mr. Giblin—as "this Government is very desirous to act in harmony with the other Colonies in all matters of Australasian concern"—agreed to ask Parliament to adopt an Address from both Houses urging Her Majesty's Government to take such steps as may be most effectual to prevent the acquisition of any of the islands referred to by any Foreign Power. The Premier added, that "if the cost were apportioned amongst the Australasian Colonies according to either revenue or population, our share would be but small compared to the advantages which might be expected to accrue to the Australasian group."

16th July,  
1883.

In August, 1883, both branches of the Tasmanian Legislature adopted an Address to Her Majesty on the lines above referred to, and it was communicated to the Imperial authorities in due course.

H. A. Votes,  
24th & 31st  
August, 1883.  
See also L. C.  
Votes.

In November, 1883, the subject was again brought prominently into notice by the deliberations of the "Intercolonial Convention" which met at Sydney. Tasmania was represented at this Convention by two Members of the Ministry—the Premier (Hon. W. R. Giblin) and the Minister of Lands (Hon. N. J. Brown). A Resolution was adopted, and forwarded to Her Majesty's Government, that the Convention "is emphatically of opinion that such steps should be immediately taken as will most conveniently and effectively secure the incorporation with the British Empire of so much of New Guinea and the small islands adjacent thereto as is not claimed by the Government of the Netherlands."

Report of  
Intercolonial  
Convention,  
Sydney, 1883.  
Convention,  
5th Dec., 1883.

Parliamentary  
Paper No. 65,  
of 1884.

Referring to this and other Resolutions of the Sydney Convention, the Secretary of State, on the 9th May, 1884, proposed to station a British Commissioner at or near New Guinea, provided that the Colonies became responsible for an annual expenditure of £15,000 for the support of the Protectorate.

19th June,  
1884.

In reply to an enquiry of the views of this Government *re* the above Despatch, Mr. Giblin telegraphed to the Premier of Victoria:—"The direct interest of Tasmania in having High Commissioner for Eastern New Guinea is *nil*. Queensland and New South Wales are most affected; but if the continental colonies are in favour of the contribution, as being a step in the direction desired, we would recommend our Parliament, for the sake of unity of action, to join in the contribution, based on proportion of population. I am not sanguine of much good resulting from such an appointment, but would defer to the opinions of those *directly* affected."

Federal Council  
Paper No. 4,  
of 1886,  
page 164.

Of the £15,000 required to meet the Protectorate expenditure, the Tasmanian contribution was a little over £600. On the 17th February, 1885, the Governor in Council approved of the following recommendation submitted by the Premier (Hon. A. Douglas):—"That so much of the vote of £600 for contribution towards Imperial expenses in connection with the Protectorate established over a portion of the Island of New Guinea as shall be required by Major-General Scratchley for expenses in connection with the above vote shall be paid to him on or before 30th June next, provided the other Australasian Colonies contribute thereto in the same proportion. As regards the future, the Colonies generally will have to make other or further arrangements."

Federal Council  
Paper No. 4,  
of 1886,  
page 176.

On the 27th April of the same year (1885) the Premier (Hon. A. Douglas), when returning to His Excellency the Governor a communication from General Scratchley, concluded his memorandum by saying:—"As to the proportionate contribution of each colony towards such expenditure, it is considered that one-half should be paid by the Imperial Government, and the other by the several colonies in the manner already arranged, viz., according to population. It is evident, however, that this island is less directly interested than the larger Colonies of Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria, and therefore your Government has consented to act in conjunction with them, and to support by all means in its power any measures which may seem most expedient to the Governments of these Colonies."

Parliamentary  
Paper No. 162,  
of 1886.

Early in 1886, the Queensland Government submitted "Draft Proposals for the future Administration of British New Guinea," which were agreed to by New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, at Sydney, on the 28th April of that year. Under this arrangement the three Colonies named undertook, by permanent Appropriation Acts, to defray the cost of the governing of British New Guinea in equal shares—any contribution from other Colonies to be applied in reduction of the total amount. The sum thus guaranteed was £15,000.

At this time the Government of South Australia had declined to continue any payment to the funds of the Protectorate, and a re-adjustment of contributions was rendered imperative.

Parliamentary  
Paper No. 162,  
of 1886.

On the 2nd July, 1886, Dr. Agnew, the Premier, wrote to Sir Samuel Griffith, that "Ministers are prepared to propose to the ensuing Parliament the appropriation of a similar sum to that contributed by Tasmania during the last two years towards the expenses connected with the Protectorate;" and added, "that this action is taken, not because Tasmania has any marked interest in New Guinea, but because the Government wish to act in a spirit of loyalty to the cause of Federation."

26th Jan.,  
1887.  
Unpublished  
Correspondence.  
£316 2s. 6d.

A further communication in reference to Tasmanian contributions, addressed to the Governor, showed that, owing to the re-adjustment of the financial year, only half the amount hitherto subscribed was available; but a pledge was given that the sanction of Parliament would be sought for a further vote which would cover the indebtedness of the Colony for the remainder of the year 1887.

19th March,  
1887.  
10th May,  
1887.

Owing to the withdrawal of South Australia from the contributing Colonies, a deficit arose in respect of the sum of £15,000 guaranteed to Her Majesty's Government. The Special Commissioner for New Guinea proposed that the remaining contributaries should make good this deficiency of £1524 11s. 7d., of which the Tasmanian share would amount to £71 13s. 4d. The Premier (Hon. P. O. Fysh) replied, "that the Government are not prepared to advocate in Parliament any proposal to vote an increase in the amount which has been contributed by Tasmania in previous years, feeling assured that no arguments that might be advanced could obtain a favourable consideration for an augmented vote. Ministers, however, will recommend the continuance for the ensuing

financial year, which terminates on 30th June, 1888, of the payment of the sum which has hitherto been contributed by this Colony towards the maintenance of the Protectorate, subject, however, to such change as may appear to them advisable should the proposals now being advocated by Sir Samuel Griffith before the Imperial Conference be carried into effect."

The Secretary of State for the Colonies brought the New Guinea question before the notice of the Colonial Conference on the 28th April, 1887, and in the discussion which ensued, Mr. Douglas, then Agent-General for the Colony, said:—"Tasmania has always contributed, and the last communication from the Government of Tasmania is that, while forming a portion of the Federal Union, she will still contribute; and I have no doubt that so long as she remains part of the Federal Union, Tasmania will contribute her proportion as arranged by the other Colonies."

Colonial Conference Proceedings, page 369.

Referring to the Memorandum forwarded by the Premier to His Excellency on the 26th January, 1887, for the information of the New Guinea Commissioner, respecting a vote for the sum of £316 2s. 6d. to complete the Tasmanian payments for the year 1887, the Treasurer, Mr. Bird, endorsed a Minute upon an application from the Commissioner for this amount, to the effect that "the Special Commissioner should also be informed that Parliament appears unwilling to vote any further sum towards the cost of governing New Guinea, and that the contribution now voted will probably be the last that this Colony will be disposed to pay."

Unpublished Correspondence.

Later correspondence showed that a misunderstanding had existed from the date of the first contribution to the Protectorate funds in regard to the period for which each payment was to be appropriated; for, instead of the instalment covering the financial year or half year for which the Estimates including such amount were framed, it was appropriated towards defraying the Protectorate expenditure for the seven months antecedent to, and for the first five months of, the Tasmanian financial year, for which it was anticipated provision had been made.

Special Commissioner, 21. 12. 87. Premier, 5. 1. 88.

Thus, the sum voted during the last Session of Parliament only defrays the liability of the Colony to 31st May, 1887, and not for the period 1st July to 31st December last, the half year for which the vote was proposed.

The Government having stated their intention of providing for the indebtedness of the Colony to the end of the year 1887, the Premier, in the Memorandum now referred to, upon discovering this discrepancy in dates and payments, gave a further promise that "Parliament should be asked to sanction a vote which will cover the indebtedness of Tasmania to 30th November, 1887."

This vote has yet to be submitted to Parliament.

The opinion of the Government in respect to future contributions was again put forward in the above quoted communication, as follows:—"There is every reason to expect that any proposal which may be brought forward for a continuance of aid to the Protectorate will fail to meet with the support of the Legislature;" and the Premier requested His Excellency to convey this opinion to Her Majesty's Special Commissioner for New Guinea.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the Premier, Mr. Fysh, on the 10th May, 1887, pledged the Ministry to recommend to Parliament a continuance, for the financial year which terminates on the 30th June, 1888, of the payment of a similar sum to that contributed in former years.

JAS. ANDREW, *Secretary to the Premier.*  
17th May, 1888.