

(No. 2.)



1863.

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T A S M A N I A.  
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

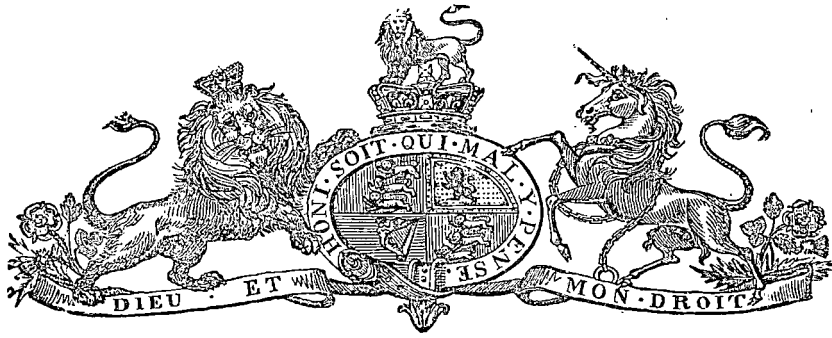
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**CLAIMS OF THE COLONY ON ACCOUNT OF  
IMPERIAL PRISONERS.**

DESPATCH FROM SECRETARY OF STATE, No. 74.

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Laid upon the Table by Mr. Innes, and ordered by the Council to be printed,  
January 16, 1863.



[TASMANIA.—No. 74.]

*Downing-street, 24th November, 1862.*

SIR,

WITH reference to your Despatch, No. 27, of the 21st February last, I have the honor to inform you that I have duly considered the paper which you therein forwarded, consisting of Resolutions agreed to by both branches of the Legislature of Tasmania on the relations between the Colony and this Country in respect of the expenditure upon Convicts.

These Resolutions announced the terms on which the Colonial Government are willing to take over the control and payment of the Convict Department. Those terms are that, over and above the whole charge of the Military Force in the Colony, Great Britain should, for the next 30 years, make the following payments :—

For 10 years £44,000 per annum.  
Next 10 years £22,000 per annum.  
Last 10 years £11,000 per annum.

The cost of the Military Force in the last three years comprised in the Table which accompanied my Despatch of the 5th of March, 1861, viz. the three years ending with 1860, inclusive, amounted to an average of upwards of £30,000 per annum. It is right to add that the number of Troops has since been reduced by nearly one-half, under the pressure of the New Zealand war; but it must be impossible to forecast the number for the next thirty years. The foregoing being a statement of the proposals of the Colonial Government, it is natural to inquire of what number of Convicts the Imperial Government would thereby be relieved. The Returns from Tasmania are so far from clear, that I can by no means rely on arriving at an accurate conclusion; but, so far as can be made out from the statistics received at this Department, there can hardly be chargeable to the Imperial Government, at present, more than about 300 Convicts in detention, and about 300 Lunatics, Invalids, or Paupers, for which this Country makes itself answerable, besides perhaps 200 Orphans, making in all 800 persons, whose number must be continually diminishing. For taking charge of these the Colony asks for Civil payments for the next 30 years of which the aggregate would amount to £770,000; and also for Military disbursements, which are more uncertain, and which have lately been much reduced, but which, at the rate of the last three years completed at the date of the Colonial proposals, would have amounted at the end of the prescribed term to £900,000.

Nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to be able to agree with the Colonial Government on some reasonable terms upon which they would undertake the control and management of the whole Convict establishment. Residing as they do on the spot, they have the best means of enforcing proper economy and good administration; and I should be very glad if the duty of the British Government could be reduced to that of paying a fair rate per head on the Convicts chargeable to this Country, leaving all the management to the discretion of the Local Government. But I must with all respect say, that the terms which I have above analysed appear in this Country so extravagant, and go so entirely beyond anything which it would be possible for the Queen's Ministers to submit to Parliament, that they do not admit of further discussion. I can only assure you that, if at some future time the Colonial Government should, on further deliberation, think it consistent with their duty to make proposals for attaining the same end, at more moderate rates of contribution, I should be very happy to give such proposals my best consideration. But I think that the only basis on which an agreement could be come to would be, not to fix arbitrarily and beforehand certain large sums of money to be paid for a long series of years irrespective of the services performed, but to provide for reducing to a rate per head the actual charges incurred for all the Convicts, whether Colonial or Imperial, and then to divide the expenditure between the two Governments in proportion to the number of Convicts chargeable to each.

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,  
NEWCASTLE.

*Governor GORE BROWNE, C.B.*