

(No. 50.)



1860.

TASMANIA.

DEFENCE OF THE COLONY.

REPORT FROM THE JOINT COMMITTEE.

Brought up by Mr. Henty, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
September 26, 1860.



REPORT of the SELECT COMMITTEE appointed on the 17th August, 1860, to consider the best means of placing Tasmania in a position to defend itself from aggression from Foreign Foes.

MEMBERS.

Legislative Council.
MR. HENTY.
CAPTAIN LANGDON.
MR. WHYTE.
MR. WILSON.
MR. CARTER.
MR. BUTTON.
MR. WEDGE.

House of Assembly.
MR. CHAPMAN.
MR. MEREDITH.
MR. WM. ARCHER.
MR. BALFE.
MR. H. BUTLER.
MR. SPEAKER.
MR. ATTORNEY-GENERAL.

DAYS OF MEETING.

- No. 1. 23 August, 1860. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. W. Archer, Mr. Meredith, Mr. Butler, Captain Langdon, Mr. Wedge, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Henty.
- No. 2. 24 August, 1860. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Balfe, Mr. W. Archer, Mr. Henty, Mr. Button, Mr. Wedge, Mr. Wilson.
- No. 3. 5 September, 1860. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Balfe, Mr. W. Archer, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Butler, Mr. Wedge, Mr. Henty, Mr. Button, Mr. Carter, Mr. Wilson.
- No. 4. 7 September, 1860. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Carter, Mr. Wedge, Mr. Button, Mr. W. Archer, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Henty.
- No. 5. 10 September, 1860. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Button, Mr. Wedge, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Henty, Mr. Chapman, Mr. W. Archer.
- No. 6. 20 September, 1860. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Henty, Mr. W. Archer, Mr. Button, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Wedge.
- No. 7. 25 September, 1860. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Button, Mr. W. Archer, Mr. Balfe, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Wedge, Mr. Henty.
- No. 8. 26 September, 1860. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Button, Mr. W. Archer, Mr. Balfe, Mr. Button, Mr. Wilson.
- No. 9. 26 September, 1860, quarter to 4. *Present*—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Button, Mr. W. Archer, Mr. Butler, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Henty.

WITNESSES EXAMINED.

Colonel BROUGHTON, R.E., Commanding the Troops.
Lieutenant SEDDON, R.E.
Captain A. F. SMITH, Hobart Town Volunteer Artillery Company.
Captain W. TARLETON, ditto.
Captain and Paymaster KILBURN, ditto.

R E P O R T .

YOUR Committee, duly impressed with the great importance of the subject they were appointed to consider, and the necessity of arriving at some prompt and practical decision upon it in the present critical juncture of European affairs, have given to the question in all its bearings the most careful and earnest consideration.

2. In the course of their enquiry they have examined such witnesses as they believed would be able, from their Military knowledge and experience, to afford them valuable information. They have also had before them the several Reports and papers bearing on the matter which have from time to time been submitted to the Legislature of this Colony.

3. Your Committee concur in opinion with the Military Authorities whom they have consulted, that the City and Anchorage of Hobart Town can be put into an adequate state of defence by means of properly constructed Land Batteries; and that three additional Batteries, of three or four guns each, will be required for the purpose, in the following positions; viz. Perry's Point, Kangaroo Point, Bluff, and Rosni.

4. Your Committee are of opinion that two fast Screw Gunboats of light draught will afford the best means of defending the Port of Hobart Town, while, at the same time, they will form an important element in the organisation of a plan for the immediate protection of the City and Anchorage.

5. They recommend that the Executive should apply to the Home Government for these Gunboats; and that they should adopt such measures as may be necessary to man and maintain them.

6. The Port of Launceston enjoys great natural advantages for defence, arising from the intricate navigation of the Tamar, the channel of which could be readily obstructed by means of chains or caissons at two of the narrowest points of the river, each protected by a Battery armed with three heavy guns.

7. Your Committee also deem it essential that the mouth of the Tamar should be fortified; for, unless this were done, the ships of an enemy might find there a harbour for the purpose of refuge or aggression. They think that two Batteries—one on Garden Island, and one between George Town and the Pilot Stations—each armed with three heavy guns, would be amply sufficient to attain the desired object. The proximity of George Town to Victoria would afford great facilities to an enemy for the spoliation of her richly freighted merchantmen, if not for the entire obstruction of the trade of this Colony with Victoria.

8. Your Committee are of opinion that it will be impossible to render the defences of the Colony thoroughly efficient without a complete armament, for the Batteries and Gunboats, of heavy guns of the latest and most approved description.

9. With respect to the total force required, both for manning the Batteries and otherwise contributing to the defence of the Island, your Committee adopt the opinion which was expressed by Colonel Broughton, R.E., now commanding the Forces in Tasmania, that two Companies of the Royal Artillery, with one Regiment of the Line, in addition to the Local Troops, would form a sufficient force to afford a fair prospect of successful resistance to invasion.

10. With regard to our Local Forces your Committee advise that the number of Volunteers should be limited at present to 1500, of whom 1000 should be raised on the Southern side and 500 on the Northern side of the Island; and, looking at the spirit with which the movement has hitherto been maintained, they entertain sanguine hopes that this number will soon be enrolled.

11. They consider that the Government should provide the Uniform Clothing required, which should be of one colour and pattern, fixed by the Executive, with distinctive facings where necessary; and that in consideration of this provision, and the supply of arms and accoutrements, the Volunteers should, on enrolment, be required to serve for a period of one year, under certain regulations to be determined by the Executive. They also think that for every Corps amounting to 200 men an Adjutant should be appointed and paid by the Government.

12. Your Committee advise that a Militia Act should be brought into operation with as little delay as possible ; and they believe it would have the effect, not only of ensuring the speedy enrolment of the required number of Volunteers, but of maintaining amongst them that discipline which is so indispensable for securing their steadiness and efficiency in time of War. They also strongly recommend that the selection and appointment of the Officers of the various Corps of Volunteers should rest entirely with His Excellency the Governor in Council.

13. Independently of these purely local defences, your Committee are decidedly of opinion that the safety, as well of Tasmania as of the other Colonies of Australia, demands that a considerable Naval Force should be employed in these seas ; and they conceive that these Colonies may look with confidence to the Imperial Government for the efficient maintenance of the force required.

14. Your Committee are quite prepared to recognise the principle laid down by General Peel as regards the aid afforded by England towards the defence of her Colonies ; viz.—“That England should assist in the defence of the Colonies against aggression on the part of foreign civilised nations.” And that “each Colony should also contribute its share by maintaining, at its own expense, a local force.” They also thoroughly coincide with the statement of the Commissioners, appointed by the Home Government to report “on the expense of Military Defences in the Colonies,” that “the ground on which we hold that England is bound to contribute towards the Defence of the Colonies is, that the Imperial Government has the control of Peace and War, and is, therefore, in honor and duty called upon to assist them in providing against the consequences of its policy.”

15. In the application of the principle laid down by General Peel, your Committee consider that the Colonists of Tasmania have special claims upon the assistance of the Home Government, arising from the peculiar nature of those past relations of this Colony with the Mother Country, the consequences of which continually entail upon us a disproportionately large expenditure “for the preservation of internal peace and order,”—an expenditure which your Committee cannot perceive any prospect of being diminished for many years to come.

16. Your Committee are fully impressed with the conviction that the defence of each of the Australian Colonies can be more efficiently secured by the co-operation of the whole ; and they earnestly trust that the Government will not delay to communicate with the Governments of the other Colonies on the subject of a general plan of operations, in the event of foreign aggression. They urgently recommend that the Electric Telegraph between this Colony and the Australian Continent should as speedily as possible be put into an efficient condition ; so that instant information of the approach of an enemy to the shores of any one Colony may be conveyed throughout the whole of Australia, both for the purposes of warning and co-operative organisation.

MICHAEL FENTON, *Chairman.*

26 *September*, 1860.