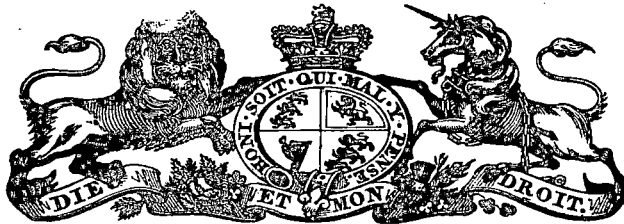


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1888.

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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

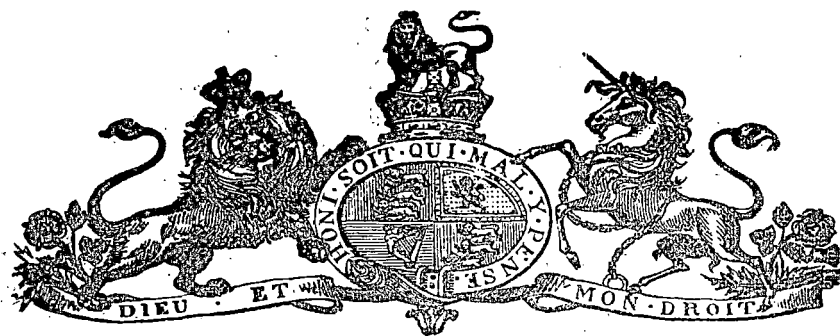
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INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS BUREAU :

MEMORANDUM OF PROPOSAL.

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



## INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS BUREAU.

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### *MEMORANDUM of Proposal, and of the Position of Tasmania in regard to Contributions.*

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THE question of securing the adhesion of the British Colonies to the proposal for the establishment of an International Bureau at Brussels, for the translation and publication of the Customs Tariffs of every country of the world, was brought under the notice of the Imperial Government by the Belgian Minister at the Court of St. James in April, 1887; and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, when communicating with His Excellency the Governor on the subject, expressed cordial approval of the scheme.

Ministers, recognising that certain commercial advantages might result from joining the proposed undertaking, concurred in such approval, and desired that the adhesion of this Colony might be notified to the Belgian Government.

No subscription to the funds required for carrying out the project was at this time sought from Tasmania, and in a later communication from the Belgian Consul-General for Australasia it appeared that the Bureau was expected to be nearly, if not entirely, self-supporting, by the amount of the subscriptions "from the great number of members of all classes of society connected with or interested in trade and industry."

The publications of the Bureau were to be printed in the four languages most generally used in trade—viz., English, German, French, and Spanish; and by periodical issues any alterations in the Tariffs of adhering States as they occurred would be brought under the notice of all associated in the scheme. Fifty-six Countries and States had at this time sent in their adhesion.

Subsequent correspondence with the Colonial Office, through the Agent-General's Department, showed that the estimated annual expense of maintaining the establishment was 100,000 francs (say £4000); and for the purpose of assessing this amount countries and colonies were to be arranged in six classes, according to the total amounts of their import and export trade, the contributions increasing from £16 in the sixth class, by additional sums of £16 in each division, to £96 in the first class. But if any of the countries or colonies enumerated failed to adhere, the amounts to be paid by the remainder would necessarily be increased.

It appeared from the "Avant-projet de Convention" that Tasmania was placed in the fifth class, and therefore the contribution due would be £32 per annum.

In reply to a subsequent enquiry from the Colonial Office, transmitted through the Agent-General's Department, whether this Government would subscribe to the annual expenditure of the Bureau at the above-named rate, the Premier sanctioned such payment, and stated that the necessary provision should be made in the Estimates to be submitted to Parliament.

It was arranged that a Conference of representatives from the adhering Countries and States should be held at Brussels on the 15th March; and in the absence of any direct instructions from this Government, who at that time had no information that such a step was contemplated, the Agent-General accepted the offer of the Secretary of State that Tasmania should be represented by the Delegates from the United Kingdom.

The Draft Convention and Regulations were provisionally settled at this Conference, and the report thereon of the British Delegates, forwarded through the Agent-General, was received on the 26th ultimo.

Certain modifications of the first proposal were accepted. The limit of maximum annual expenditure was raised from 100,000 francs to 125,000 francs, but such increase will permit of the publications of the Bureau appearing in five, instead of four languages, as originally specified; Italian being included. The contributions of States whose language would not be used were to be reduced by two-fifths: thus, Russia and the Netherlands, who both figured in the highest class of the Belgian draft scheme at 30 units, were each to pay only 18 units.

In the earlier stages of the proposal provision was to be made for an expenditure of 100,000 francs for the foundation of the Bureau, 50,000 francs for establishing a pension fund for the employees, and 50,000 francs for furniture and plant. The former amount was eliminated by the Conference, leaving only the 50,000 francs for plant. States that may subsequently adhere to the Convention will have to pay their quota to this capital expenditure.

The system of classification previously alluded to was also revised at the Conference, and seven instead of six divisions of contributing States were arranged for, as follows:—

1st Class.	Trade of more than 4 milliards francs (160 millions sterling)	35 units.
2nd Class.	1 to 4 milliards francs (40 to 60 millions sterling).....	30 „
3rd Class.	500 millions to 1 milliard francs (20 to 40 millions sterling)...	25 „
4th Class.	100 to 500 millions francs (4 to 20 millions sterling).....	20 „
5th Class.	25 to 100 millions francs (1 to 4 millions sterling).....	15 „
6th Class.	15 to 25 millions francs (£600,000 to 1 million sterling).....	10 „
7th Class.	Below 15 millions francs (£600,000 sterling).....	5 „

Owing to a large number of countries enumerated in the original list of possible contributors having declined to adhere, the shares payable by Great Britain and her Colonies become considerably increased, amounting to no less than 43 per cent. of the total cost, or 54,000 francs out of 125,000 francs. Of the Australasian Colonies, New South Wales is grouped in the second class, Victoria in the third, South Australia, New Zealand, and Queensland in the fourth, Tasmania in the fifth, and West Australia in the sixth.

Copies of the Bulletin of the Bureau, at the rate of 15 francs each, are to be issued free of charge to the adhering States equal to the amount of their annual contributions.

The term of duration of the Convention is to be limited to seven instead of ten years, as at first proposed, and the organisation and working of the Bureau, so far as they are not provided for in the Convention and Regulations, are to be left in the hands of the Belgian Government.

It is expected that the Conference will shortly reassemble (or has by this time met), when a fresh scheme of apportionment of contributions will be submitted; and, if accepted by the different States, a meeting of delegates will be arranged for January next, for the purpose of formally signing the Convention.

8th October, 1888.

JAS. ANDREW,  
*Secretary to the Premier.*