

(No. 125.)



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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

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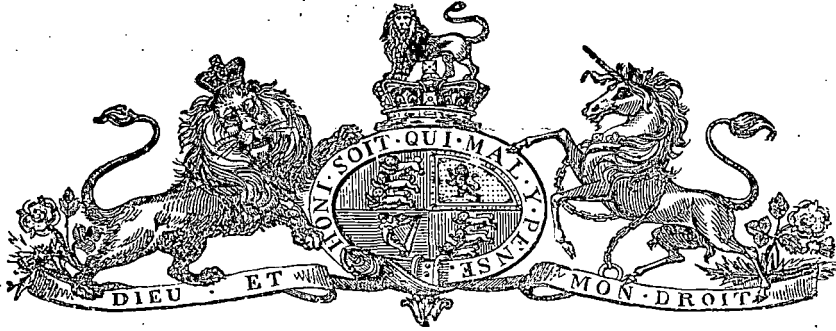
CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH :

CORRESPONDENCE ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PROPOSED  
ABOLITION OF THE CENTRAL BOARD.

*Return to an Order of the House of Assembly. (Mr. Nicholas Brown.)*

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Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands and Works, October 6; and  
ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed, October 13, 1887.



*Chief Secretary's Office, Hobart, 29th December, 1886.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that the Estimates passed by Parliament for 1887 make no provision for the payment of any salary to the President of the Central Board of Health, nor for an Inspector; and the Government, acting in accordance with the expressed opinion of the Legislature, have arrived at the decision to abstain from appropriating the amounts voted, in accordance with the provisions of the 8th Section of "The Public Health Act," (49 Victoria, No. 18), for payment to Members of the Board.

The Government desire to convey to you and the other Members of the Central Board an expression of their appreciation of the services rendered to this Colony since the appointment of the Board; and though Parliament, in the exercise of its discretion, has withdrawn the emolument attached to the office, Ministers trust that you and your colleagues may be induced to continue to afford the Government your valuable aid in carrying out the provisions of this important Act, at any rate until the next Session, when the subject will be again brought under the consideration of Parliament.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

J. W. AGNEW.

*The President of the Central Board of Health, Hobart.*

*Hobart, 7th January, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor, by direction of the President of the Central Board of Health, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th December, intimating that the Estimates passed by Parliament for 1887 made no provision for the payment of his salary as President of that Board, nor for an Inspector; and that the Government, acting in accordance with the expressed opinion of the Legislature, had decided to abstain from appropriating the amounts voted, in accordance with the provisions of the 8th Section of "The Public Health Act, 1885," (49 Victoria, No. 18), for payment of Members of the Board.

This letter was duly laid before the Central Board of Health at a meeting held on the 30th December; and I am directed by that Board to thank the Government for the expression conveyed therein of its appreciation of the Board's services rendered to the Colony since its appointment, coupled with the hope that it would continue, without any emolument, to assist the Government in carrying out the provisions of the Public Health Act, at any rate until the next Session, when the subject would be again brought under the consideration of Parliament.

I have also further the honor, by direction, to inform you that the Board, referring to its letter to you of the 29th October last, adheres to the expression of opinion then made; but, at the express wish of Government, and to cause as little embarrassment as possible, it is prepared to continue to fulfil such unimportant and restricted functions as will be possible in the absence of an Inspector, on the understanding that should any emergency arise it shall be empowered to employ such an officer for the occasion.

At the same time the Board wishes to record its sense of the extreme hardship resulting to its Inspector from the action of Parliament, and to press his claim upon the consideration of Government under the circumstances.

I have, &c.

W. H. GRAHAM, *Secretary.*

*The Honorable the Chief Secretary.*

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*Chief Secretary's Office, Hobart, 20th July, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that the Government, when submitting for the consideration of Parliament a Bill to amend "The Public Health Act, 1885," purpose to introduce provisions for the discharge of the duties now devolving upon the Central Board of Health by a Responsible Minister.

Under these circumstances I take the earliest opportunity to inform you that the services of the Board will not be required after the 30th of next September, and I shall feel obliged by your acquainting the Members of the Board and their officers of the proposed change.

The Government desire to convey to you and the Members of the Board their hearty thanks for the disinterested manner in which their services have been placed at the disposal of the public, and for the unremitting zeal and energy they have evinced in the endeavour to secure the successful operation of a most important measure.

I have, &c.

P. O. FYSH.

H. A. PERKINS, *Esquire, M.D., President of the Central Board of Health.*

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*Hobart, 11th August, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 20th ultimo, and to inform you that the notification it contains of the intentions of the Government has been considered by the Members of the Central Board of Health at a meeting held to day.

In the first place they beg to call your attention to the fact that this notification is completely at variance with the understanding arrived at with the late Government, on the faith of which the services of the Board were secured. On the 10th of December last the Members of the Board had an interview with the late Ministry, when they received a definite promise that the Government would in the next Session of Parliament "reintroduce and support a motion for the whole of the salaries being placed on the Estimates." This promise was repeated by the Honorable the ex-Chief Secretary in his letter of the 29th December last: "The Government desire to convey to you and the other Members of the Central Board an expression of their appreciation of the services rendered to this Colony since the appointment of the Board; and though Parliament, in the exercise of its discretion, has withdrawn the emolument attached to the office, Ministers trust that you and your colleagues may be induced to continue to afford the Government your valuable aid in carrying out the provisions of this important Act, at any rate until next Session, when the subject will be again brought under the consideration of Parliament."

I am further authorised by the Members of the Board to state that, apart from this question of good faith being kept with them, they would view with regret the proposed change, inasmuch as it is not, in their opinion, likely to advance the interests of the public health, nor is it in accord with the progressive spirit with which Health Acts are administered in the other Colonies.

In Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, Boards—if not in all cases paid Boards—exist; and if at any time there has been a failure on the part of these Boards, it was only because sufficient administrative and executive powers had not been committed to them. In Victoria, at the present moment, Mr. Deakin is bringing in an amended Health Bill conferring large supplementary powers on the Central Board of that Colony.

The Members of the Central Board of Tasmania, while thanking you for your courteous acknowledgment of their services, can claim that they have had to contend with much opposition and many disadvantages. Not the least of these has been the removal of a tried and valued officer, the Sanitary Engineer of the Board. Parliament thought fit to disallow the item for payment of his salary at a time when the Board was pointing out and setting at work agencies which would have done much to check the recent outbreak of typhoid fever at Hobart and elsewhere.

The payment of Members of the Board was looked upon by them not only as some recognition of the value of their services, but as showing that they possessed the moral support of the Legislature. The refusal to sanction such payment was not only discouraging to them, as well as to all future Boards, but must have had the effect of weakening their position in the eyes of Local Boards of Health and the country generally.

Knowing that a Public Health Act requires not only to be properly floated, but that some years must elapse before it can be adapted to all the wants of the community, and recognizing that its efficient administration always implies interference with some private and commercial interests, both of individuals and of corporations, the Central Board hopes that the changes contemplated by the present Ministers will not be carried into effect, and that the Parliament of Tasmania will grant it further time, support it in the exercise of its authority, and provide it with such officers as are necessary to the efficient administration of the Public Health Act.

I have, &c.

H. A. PERKINS, *M.D.*, *President.*

*The Hon. the Chief Secretary.*

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*Chief Secretary's Office, Hobart, 16th August, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th instant, informing me that my communication of the 20th ultimo, notifying the intentions of the Government as regards the discontinuance of the Central Board of Health, had been considered by the Board, and expressing a hope that the contemplated change will not be carried into effect, and that the Parliament will grant the Board further time, support it in the exercise of its authority, and provide it with such officers as are necessary to the efficient administration of the Public Health Act.

I desire, in the first place, to point out that the intentions of the late Government are in no way to be taken as binding on the present Administration, especially as the Parliament was, on two occasions, invited to consider those intentions, and unmistakably declined to entertain them.

While attaching much weight to the opinions of the Board in the proposed changes, and acknowledging the value of the services rendered by the able Sanitary Engineer of the Board, and fully recognising the amount of opposition and many disadvantages against which the Board has had to contend, it is hardly necessary for me to point out that it is Parliament that makes provision for and controls the expenditure of the Colony; and if, to adopt your own argument, the payment of the Board was proof of the moral support of the Legislature, it follows that the refusal of the Legislature to continue that payment involves the conclusion that the moral support was withdrawn, and thereupon arises the necessity for the impending changes which I have had the honor to communicate.

The action of Parliament clearly indicates that it differs from some of the conclusions of the Board; but it may be generally admitted that the working of so important an Act and system for the first year is tentative, and the best ultimate permanent results can only be achieved by adapting the administration of the law to circumstances which may develop from time to time.

Parliament and the Board have a common object in view, and the former will decide how that object may be best attained.

I have, &c.

P. O. FYSH.

H. A. PERKINS, *Esq.*, *M.D.*,  
*President Central Board of Health, Hobart.*

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*Chief Secretary's Office, 27th September, 1887.*

SIR,

CIRCUMSTANCES having up to the present time prevented the Government from securing the consideration by Parliament of the details of the Amended Public Health Bill, but which I trust will in a short time receive the approval of the Legislature and become law, I have the honor to request that in view of the present emergency arising from the appearance of smallpox in the Colony, yourself as President, and the other Members of the Central Board of Health, will consent to continue in the discharge of the important duties devolving by the existing law on that Board, until the proposed alterations in the machinery for carrying them into effect as provided in the Bill before Parliament shall have come into operation.

The Government highly appreciate and fully recognize the valuable services rendered to the Colony by the present Board, and they feel that the totally unanticipated circumstances which have arisen from the unavoidable delay in the passage of the Amending Health Bill, and the presence of the dreaded disease of smallpox in our midst, afford them the only grounds upon which they are entitled to rely upon the continued co-operation of the Members of the Board.

I have, &c.

P. O. FYSH.

*The President Central Board of Health.*

*Hobart, 28th September, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 27th instant, in which the Government request the continuation of the services of the Members of the Central Board of Health "until an Amended Public Health Act shall have come into operation."

I am authorised by the Board to state in reply that, apart altogether from this consideration, but solely on account of the emergency which has so unfortunately arisen through the breaking out of smallpox in our midst, they are willing to accede to the request of the Government, and continue to discharge to the best of their ability the onerous and important duties devolving upon them, provided the Government will at once afford the requisite Officers and machinery to enable them to carry out the Act efficiently, and thus place the Board in a position to command, especially at this juncture, the respect and confidence of the community.

I am further instructed to state that if the Government is desirous of retaining the services of the Central Board after the present emergency has ceased to exist, the Board will expect that the necessary provisions will be made to enable it to administer the Public Health Act efficiently, and to place it in a position analogous to that of the Central Boards of Health in the adjacent Colonies.

I have, &c.

H. A. PERKINS, M.D., *President.*

*The Hon. the Chief Secretary.*

*Chief Secretary's Office, Hobart, 29th September, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, informing me that the Members of the Central Board of Health have consented to continue the discharge of the onerous and important duties devolving upon them in consideration of the existing emergency, provided the Government will at once afford the requisite Officers and machinery to enable them to carry out the Act efficiently.

I desire to convey to the Members of the Board my thanks for their prompt compliance with the wish of the Government; but it will be necessary that you should acquaint me, in detail, as to what Officers and what machinery the Board may deem requisite to enable them to discharge their duties at the present juncture, so that I may lay your proposals before my colleagues as soon as possible.

I have, &c.

P. O. FYSH.

*The President Central Board of Health, Hobart.*

*Hobart, 30th September, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, thanking the Members of the Central Board of Health for consenting to continue to discharge their duties in connection with that Board in consideration of the existing emergency, and asking what Officers and what machinery they deem requisite?

I am authorised to state, in reply, that in order to discharge their duties at the present juncture, it is indispensable that the services of a properly paid Secretary and an Inspector should be secured to the Board. With these Officers the Board would endeavour to exercise their functions and assist the Government in every possible way under the unfortunate emergency that has arisen.

I have, &c.

H. A. PERKINS, M.D., *President.*

*The Honorable the Chief Secretary.*