

(No. 64.)



1868.

TASMANIA.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

STATE AID COMMUTATION BILL.

PETITIONS.

Presented, September 1 ; and ordered by the Council to be printed, September 4,
1868.



To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of Hobart Town.

SHOWETH :

THAT a Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies has passed the Honorable the House of Assembly, and awaits the sanction of your Honorable House.

That your Petitioners have been taken by surprise at the passing of a measure for the payment of so large a sum as £100,000, and an additional sum of £2000 a year for an indefinite time to the aided Churches, while also the vested rights of all parties secured by the State Aid Distribution Act, and their Pensions, are still to be charged on the State.

That there has not been sufficient time to ascertain or express the opinion of the Country at large on the said Bill.

That your Petitioners are of opinion that the sum of £50,000 in cash, besides the continuance of all life interests of Clergymen named in the Schedule of the Distribution Act, is a liberal compensation for all Ecclesiastical claims.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray your Honorable House not to pass any Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religion which requires the Country to pay more than the sum of £50,000, and the life interests secured by the State Aid Distribution Act.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

[Here follow 1308 Signatures.]

Petitions in the same terms were presented—

1. From Inhabitants of Ross with 67 signatures.
2. From Inhabitants of Swansea with 6 signatures.
3. From Inhabitants of Sorell with 3 signatures.
4. From Inhabitants of Carlton with 23 signatures.
5. From Inhabitants of Muddy Plains with 17 signatures.
6. From Inhabitants of Jerusalem with 33 signatures.
7. From Inhabitants of Kangaroo Point with 36 signatures.
8. From Inhabitants of Richmond with 17 signatures.
9. From Inhabitants of New Town with 12 signatures.
10. From Inhabitants of O'Brien's Bridge with 18 signatures.
11. From Inhabitants of Glenorchy with 23 signatures.
12. From Inhabitants of Queenborough with 49 signatures.
13. From Inhabitants of Bothwell with 13 signatures.
14. From Inhabitants of New Norfolk with 33 signatures.
15. From Inhabitants of Port Cygnet with 23 signatures.
16. From Inhabitants of Brown's River with 22 signatures.
17. From Inhabitants of Victoria (Huon) with 11 signatures.
18. From Inhabitants of Upper Huon with 3 signatures.

19. From Inhabitants of Shipwrights Point with 8 signatures.
20. From Inhabitants of Hunting Ground with 6 signatures.
21. From Inhabitants of Honeywood with 20 signatures.
22. From Inhabitants of Franklin with 43 signatures.
23. From Inhabitants of Constitution Hill with 28 signatures.
24. From Inhabitants of Brighton with 52 signatures.
25. From Inhabitants of Oatlands with 30 signatures.
26. From Inhabitants of Green Ponds with 64 signatures.

To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Members of the Primitive Methodist Church and Congregation meeting for Worship in the Chapel in Collins-street, Hobarton.

SHOWETH :

THAT a Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies has passed the Honorable the House of Assembly, and is now under the consideration of your Honorable House.

That your Petitioners, as Members of the Protestant Church, are deeply anxious for the maintenance, in this land, of pure Religion according to the teaching of God's Holy Word, and look with painful apprehension upon the passing of a measure which, by endowing all Creeds indiscriminately, makes no distinction between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood, and will, if passed into law, be a perpetual endowment of error.

Your Petitioners therefore pray your Honorable House not to pass the said Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

[Here follow 15 Signatures.]

Petitions in the same terms were presented—

1. From United Methodist Free Church, Murray-street, Hobart Town, with 3 signatures.
2. From Independents, Richmond, with 23 signatures.
3. From Chalmer's Free Church, Hobart Town, with 73 signatures.

To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of Launceston.

SHOWETH :

THAT the Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religion, now before your Honorable House, if passed into law will perpetuate a burdensome charge upon the Colony, which its decreasing Revenue cannot sustain.

That to withdraw so large an expenditure of public money from the future control of Parliament, to be vested in irresponsible Ecclesiastical Bodies, is opposed to the Constitutional principle that Parliament is the legitimate guardian of the Public Funds.

That while your Petitioners desire to do full justice to all parties having pecuniary claims, and preserve inviolate all vested rights, they regard the State Aid Commutation Bill as entirely unprecedented and unjustifiable.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Honorable House will not pass the said Bill.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

[Here follow 341 Signatures.]

To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament now assembled.

The humble Petition of the Minister and Deacons of Prince's Square Congregational Church,
Launceston.

SHOWETH :

THAT a Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies has passed the Honorable the House of Assembly, and awaits the sanction of your Honorable House.

That your Petitioners have been taken by surprise at the passing of a measure for the payment of so large a sum as £100,000, and an additional sum of £2000 a year for an indefinite time to the aided Churches, while also the vested rights of all parties secured by "The State Aid Distribution Act," and their Pensions, are still to be paid by the State.

That there has not been sufficient time to ascertain or express the opinion of the Country at large on the said Bill.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray your Honorable House not to pass the said Bill.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

[Here follow 5 Signatures.]

To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Minister and Officers of the Primitive Methodist Church
at Launceston.

SHOWETH :

THAT a Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies has passed the Honorable the House of Assembly, and awaits the sanction of your Honorable House.

That your Petitioners have been taken by surprise at the passing of a measure for the payment of so large a sum as £100,000, and an additional sum of £2000 a year for an indefinite time to the aided Churches, whilst also the vested rights of all parties secured by "The State Aid Distribution Act," and their Pensions, are still to be charged on the State.

That there has not been sufficient time to ascertain or express the opinion of the Country at large on the said Bill.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray your Honorable House not to pass the said Bill.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

[Here follow 3 Signatures.]

To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Clergyman of the United Church of England and Ireland
in Tasmania.

SHOWETH :

THAT a sum of Fifteen thousand Pounds is reserved for Public Worship from the General Revenue, by the Act of the Imperial Parliament, from which the Parliament of Tasmania derives its existence.

That a Bill has been submitted to your Honorable House by the Government for the Commutation of the said Reserve.

That the Church which your Petitioner represents is justly entitled, as he believes, to the full amount of the Income now assigned to it out of the said Reserve.

That your Petitioner is willing, for the sake of peace, and in order to a more secure and final settlement of an agitated question, to accept the Commutation proposed in the Bill.

Your Petitioner therefore prays that your Honorable House will be pleased to pass the Bill for the Commutation of the Reserve for Public Worship.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

JOHN DIXON, *Chaplain of St. Matthias, Windermere.*

To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Members of the Congregational Church and Congregation meeting for Worship in Brisbane-street.

SHOWETH :

THAT a Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies has passed the Honorable the House of Assembly, and is now under the consideration of your Honorable House.

That your Petitioners, as Members of the Protestant Church, are very anxious for the maintenance, in this land, of pure Religion according to the teaching of God's Holy Word, and deplore the existing system of State Aid by which the Government is committed to the support of all Creeds indiscriminately.

That your Petitioners desire that all vested rights should be properly regarded, but that no such sum be given to the Churches as would constitute a perpetual endowment.

That in the opinion of your Petitioners the passing of the said Bill would perpetuate an endowment to all Creeds indiscriminately.

Your Petitioners therefore pray your Honorable House not to pass the said Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

[*Here follow 47 Signatures.*]

To the Honorable the Members of the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of Robert M'Lean, Senr., Minister of St. John's Presbyterian Church, Hobarton.

HUMBLY SHOWETH :

THAT your Petitioner, solicitous for the welfare both temporal and spiritual of this his adopted Country, is decidedly of opinion that to pass the Bill usually designated "The State Aid Commutation Act," in lieu of the amount now received by the Clergy of the several Denominations, and to give, as is now proposed, One hundred thousand Pounds and upwards to purchase Debentures, and to pay a large amount of interest thereon, would be a burden so grievous and oppressive to the community that neither we nor our posterity would be able or willing to bear. Why, then, I respectfully ask, while such multitudes are crying out against increased taxation, should your Honorable House adopt a course that would greatly augment that taxation? Is it not obvious, from what we see taking place in the British Isles, that "coming events are casting their shadows before," and are forcibly warning us that both the Clergy and the people of the several Denominations should carefully prepare for a period when all Government salaries shall cease, and when a Christian people will aid and support a Christian Ministry in obedience to a Divine command—"Let him who is taught in the word communicate to Him who teacheth in all good things?"

Hoping, therefore, that your Honorable House will cease to subsidise error as well as truth, permit me to implore you, with all due respect, so to arrange matters as that all Government salaries to the Clergy of the several Denominations may be allowed to expire on the decease or removal of the several Incumbents.

And your Petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

ROBT. M'LEAN.

To the Honorable the President and Members of the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Minister, Members, and Seat-holders of the Presbyterian Church, Evandale.

HUMBLY SHOWETH :

THAT your Petitioners believe the indiscriminate support of opposing Creeds to be sinful in the sight of God, and obstructive to the progress of Christianity.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that the Bill now under consideration by your Honorable House, for the purpose of setting apart £100,000 to be distributed among the various Religious Denominations of the Colony as a perpetual endowment, will not be permitted to become law.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[Here follow 44 Signatures.]

To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Ministers and Office-bearers of the Primitive Methodist Church at Longford.

SHOWETH :

THAT a Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious bodies has passed the Honorable the House of Assembly, and awaits the sanction of your Honorable House.

That your Petitioners have been taken by surprise at the passing of a measure for the payment of so large a sum as £100,000, and an additional sum of £2000 a year for an indefinite time to the aided Churches, while also the vested rights of all parties secured by "The State Aid Distribution Act," and their Pensions, are still to be charged on the State.

That there has not been sufficient time to ascertain or express the opinion of the Country at large on the said Bill.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray your Honorable House not to pass the said Bill.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

[Here follow 6 Signatures]

To the Honorable the Legislative Council, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of Mona Vale and its vicinity.

SHOWETH :

THAT a Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies has passed the Honorable the House of Assembly, and awaits the sanction of your Honorable House.

That your Petitioners, while believing that the endowment of any Religious Body is in no wise conducive to the interests of true Religion and morality, and protesting against the anomalous practice hitherto prevailing in this Colony of subsidising indiscriminately Churches of every conflicting creed, are nevertheless anxious that this constantly recurring source of public irritation and bitterness shall be finally disposed of by an equitable commutation of all vested rights.

That your Petitioners are filled with surprise and indignation on finding that the Bill now before your Honorable House proposes not only to hand over to the various Churches the enormous sum of £100,000, and to continue the annual payment of existing claims during the lives of the present recipients, but also that this is to be supplemented by a further yearly grant of £2000, mainly for the perpetuation of a system which your Petitioners believe to be inimical to the Religious and material interests of the community.

That your Petitioners humbly request your Honorable House to take into consideration the depressed condition of all classes of the community, and also the fact that additional taxation has been found necessary to meet the legitimate Governmental expenditure of the Colony.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray that no Bill having for its object the perpetual endowment of any Religious Body, or that seeks for more than an equitable capitalisation of the vested interests secured to the present holders thereof by the provisions of "The State Aid Distribution Act," will meet the approbation of your Honorable House.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

[Here follow 15 Signatures.]

To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Members of the Church of England in Tasmania.

SHOWETH:

THAT a sum of Fifteen thousand Pounds is reserved for Public Worship from the General Revenue.

That a Bill has been submitted to your Honorable House by the Government for the Commutation of the said reserve.

That the question of State support is, and ought to be, within the power of the people through their representatives in Parliament; and that it will be a violation of the principles of a Constitutional Government to deprive succeeding generations of this right.

That this Commutation is proposed mainly because its abettors believe that the growth of opinion will almost certainly lead the people before many years have passed to revoke this reserve, and its Commutation is now proposed with the intention of forestalling and defeating the exercise of this their just right.

That the proposed Commutation, based as it is on "The State Aid Distribution Act," is unjust to the Protestants of this community, because many who conscientiously refuse State Aid are made to contribute to the support of religious opinions which they abhor; and further because it is not true, as stated in the *Church News*, that "No member of any Religious body named in 'The Distribution Act' really contributes anything, as is sometimes represented, towards the support of any other worship than that which he professes to approve," inasmuch as the Protestant members of the community, in consequence of their greater wealth, which wealth is due entirely to their emancipation from the blighting influence of an Idolatrous Worship, are much larger contributors to the General Revenue of the Colony in proportion to their numbers than the Romanists,—and consequently, by the proposed arrangement, they are made to contribute, in violation of their conscience and their duty as loyal subjects, to the perpetual endowment of a Religion which they believe to be designated in Scripture as that of Antichrist, and whose followers they know profess a higher allegiance to a Foreign Potentate, who is hostile to the Religion and Institutions of the Empire, than to the Sovereign and laws whose subjects we all are.

That now in these latter days, when we are distinctly warned by the Word of God that Antichrist shall greatly prevail in the world, of which there is such abundant and increasing evidence even, with sorrow and shame be it said, in the very bosom of our own Branch of Christ's Church, it will be in defiance of God's warnings if we do aught to promote or encourage that which we believe from the concurrent testimony of History and God's Holy Word to be destructive of the highest interests of mankind and hateful to God Himself.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that your Honorable House will be pleased not to pass this Bill; and that you will, for the promotion of God's glory, the good of His Church, and the welfare of the Country, leave us to our faith in His most gracious protection, trusting in His most sure promises that He will provide for His own Church, and more especially confiding in our Saviour's ordinance that "they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel," abolish at once all State Aid to Religious Worship, always protecting vested rights.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

WILLIAM VALENTINE.
ISAAC RICHARDSON.

Campbell Town, August 12, 1868.

To the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the Religious Society of Friends.

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH :

THAT a Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies has passed the House of Assembly, and is now under the consideration of the Legislative Council.

That it is the conviction of your Petitioners that it is contrary to the law of Truth and Righteousness to compel any body of professing Christians, even through the indirect medium of the General Revenue of the Colony, to contribute to the support of others whose system of Religious belief and practice they regard as at variance with the doctrines of the New Testament.

That we have no desire to urge the breaking of engagements made with those persons who have come here as Civil Servants of the Colony ; but we cannot do otherwise than raise our voice against the perpetual endowment of all Religious Creeds.

That your Petitioners would therefore respectfully yet earnestly solicit the Legislative Council to withhold its assent to the Bill for the Commutation of State Aid to Religious Bodies as passed by the House of Assembly.

We are respectfully,

Signed on behalf of the Religious Society of Friends in Tasmania, the 28th day of the 8th month, 1868.

[Here follow 6 Signatures.]