

(No. 84.)



1881.

TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

NORTH WEST COAST:

PETITION FOR BRANCH ROADS.

Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Treasurer, August 9, 1881, and ordered by the House to be printed.



To His Excellency Lieutenant-General SIR JOHN HENRY LEFROY, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
Administrator of the Government of Tasmania.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :

YOUR Petitioners, the undersigned inhabitants of the North West Coast of Tasmania, most respectfully address to you their humble Petition, and ask Your Excellency's favourable consideration thereto, on the grounds both of justice to Petitioners and promotion of the best interests of the whole Colony.

The North West Coast comprises the Port Sorell District, which, as to agriculture, is first of the twenty-eight Municipal and Police Districts into which Tasmania is divided; and within its limits are the large towns of Latrobe and Waratah, and Bischoff, the most productive and permanent tin mine.

But considerable though its growth has been, the North West Coast is yet only in the early stage of development. Already standing first among agricultural and mining districts, it possesses a capacity of expansion that is rivalled by no other part of Tasmania. The value of the North West Coast to the State is great now: it may be far greater if timely measures be adopted for encouraging mining and promoting settlement.

It is not that the North West Coast clamours for much and gives nothing. It has yielded to the State by sale of Crown lands more than £300,000, of which less than half has been expended upon its public works. It has by its minerals largely contributed to the wealth of the Colony, and its population may safely be said to pay one-eighth of the Customs duties levied in Tasmania, *i.e.*, £27,000 per annum, besides their share of other imposts.

But while the people of the North West Coast have paid taxes uncomplainingly, and exhibited untailing loyalty to the Government, they have seen their interests sacrificed by the Legislature, and themselves denied a fair share in those advantages of roads and railways for which they so largely help to pay. By the obstructive action of the Legislative Council in this respect, the progress of settlement has been seriously stayed, and the lot of many existing settlers rendered almost unendurable. It is no exaggeration to say that a continuance of such legislative action must not only stop new settlement, but drive out of the district many who are now settled.

For the difficulties of carriage experienced by the farmers in the country lying back a few miles from the seaboard are such as none would submit to but for the hope of immediate improvement. For want of roads to carry their produce to market many farmers of the North West Coast are unable to grow potatoes, although potatoes constitute for others the most, and sometimes the only, remunerative crop. Other farmers, unable for the same reason to get their crops to market, now have the produce of their labour lying rotten and useless in their barns; and these farmers are struggling men, whose toil is their capital—to whom one bad season brings much of deprivation, and whose ultimate ruin must be the outcome of a series of bad seasons due in great part to the one crowning difficulty—the want of roads.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray that their necessities in respect of branch roads may be taken into earnest consideration by Your Excellency's Government; and in asking this they would point out the indubitable fact that by giving the roads for which the North West Coast asks, the State will be more than fully reimbursed by increased population and advanced settlement. The branch roads that will open up the rich and agricultural lands and the vast mineral resources of this Coast must prove in the best sense remunerative works. It is the prayer of your Petitioners that early and effective measures may be adopted to confer upon them the boon these roads must prove to them and the Colony generally.

In asking that branch roads should be made, your Petitioners express their willingness to accept the principle of local responsibility for maintenance of properly constructed roads (proclaimed as such by the Governor in Council), on the condition as to subsidy which has hitherto prevailed.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

[Here follow 765 Signatures.]

WILLIAM THOMAS STRUTT,
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.