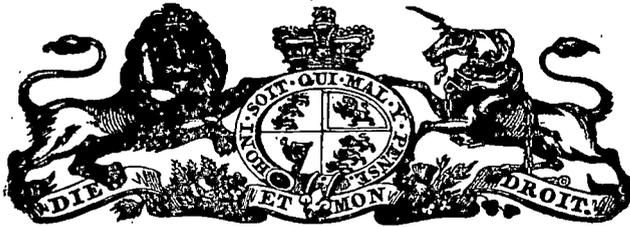


(No. 93.)



1889.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PROPOSED RECIPROCITY TREATY WITH
QUEENSLAND :

CORRESPONDENCE.

Return to an Order of the House of Assembly. (Mr. Burgess.)

Laid upon the Table by the Treasurer, and ordered by the House of Assembly to
be printed, August 29, 1889.



RECIPROCITY.

[*Mercury*, 3rd November, 1886.—*Vide* D.P. 75.]

A LARGE and influential deputation waited upon the Treasurer, the Hon. W. H. Burgess, yesterday, to urge the desirability of the Government continuing negotiations with the view of establishing reciprocity between Tasmania and the other colonies. The deputation was headed by Mr. John Macfarlane, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, and consisted of Messrs. Cook, Burrowes, Paget, Holmes, Johnston Bros., Risby, Armstrong, Facy, Andrewartha, Murdoch, Webster, Grubb, E. M. Fisher, Wise, Fitzgerald, Pearce, Finnighan, Snowden, Brownell, Baily, Sawyer, Cane, Atkins, Lade, Gibson, Turner, Dossetor, Peet, Peak, Knight and Co., Hawkins and Co., H. Wright, Haywood, Arnold, Bridges, Wignall, Burgoyne.

MR. MACFARLANE said that the Treasurer would be aware, from a communication sent by the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, of the subject of the deputation. It related to an interchange of products between the neighbouring colonies—a matter that had been long advocated by the Chamber of Commerce, and opportunity was now taken, when the subject was receiving more public consideration than it had done of late, to bring the matter again under the notice of the Government with the view that steps be taken towards attaining this great object. He need not remind the Hon. Minister of the advantage that would accrue to the Colony and to all engaged in this movement were it successfully carried out. It was not a mere matter of individual benefit to each Colony interested, but he thought they might take a wider and broader view of the question, and look upon it as one of those steps which would help towards making the Australasian colonies one great nation in the future. He felt confident that the difficulties that now surrounded the subject would yet be overcome.

MR. FITZGERALD thought it would be as well to state the conclusion the Chamber of Commerce had come to, and which met the wishes of the mercantile community. It was that a free interchange of natural products and manufactures therefrom might be easily made. Last year a resolution was come to by the Chamber of Commerce in favour of the Government scheme, but seeing the difficulties that surrounded that scheme, and the very many grave objections publicly offered to it in Tasmania and the adjoining Colony of Victoria, the Chamber of Commerce had since adopted the resolution mentioned. It was thought that if reciprocity could be brought about with one or two of the other colonies, it would be advisable to do so. (Hear, hear.) It was thought that it was not necessary to wait until all the colonies joined in a reciprocity scheme, but that if immediate action were taken and reciprocity concluded with one, the others would be found willing and ready to follow. He believed that there was a strong feeling in New South Wales to ally with Tasmania. Probably the Ministers there might deem the present movement hardly an opportune one to open negotiations, but he was aware that in that colony there was a strong feeling for allies, and that they would prefer to ally themselves with Tasmania to continue to negotiate with Victoria, which they regarded as a hopeless case in this respect. They must remember in arranging as to an interchange of products, that it would be well to select colonies whose products would not enter into competition with Tasmanian produce, as was the case in regard to Queensland, New South Wales, and Western Australia. A very good example was found of this mutual benefit in the arrangement between San Francisco and Honolulu. Coffee and sugar were produced in Honolulu, and in return for those productions timber was sent and admitted free of duty. This afforded an illustration of how they might proceed in attempting to open negotiations with the other colonies. In regard to Victoria there was the great barrier felt that she would come into competition with our own fruits, cereals, and vegetables. If, however, they could bring about reciprocity with one of the more northern colonies it would be an introduction to a general system of interchange into which he had no doubt Victoria would ultimately require to come.

MR. W. F. BROWNELL felt that the movement was a most important one for the Colony. He agreed that if they could bring about such an arrangement as that suggested by Mr. Fitzgerald, and arrange for interchange with the northern colonies, whose products differed from our own, they would be more likely to have real reciprocity than by attempting to carry out the proposal of last year with a colony with which our products would clash. At the same time the matter was compassed with difficulties, and he could well understand the Treasurer realising those difficulties, as it would involve a complete revolution of the fiscal system, and bring about such a change as they little thought of; and all those matters would require to be duly considered by the Treasurer and the Executive. Although some considerable time might elapse before any direct benefit accrued, still it was desirable to commence negotiations to see on what lines this proposed reciprocity could be carried out. (Hear, hear.)

The TREASURER said that he met the deputation with a great deal of pleasure, because the subject they had again brought under his notice was one in which he took a very lively and warm interest. He thought that they, in Tasmania, might fairly lay claim to having had for many years past a desire to bring about reciprocity with the other colonies in the Australian group. So far back as 1873 this Colony passed an Enabling Act, so that the Government might enter into treaties with other colonies, and although up to the present time they had not been successful, he, for one, was not disheartened. He was not frightened of any difficulties that might be brought about in reference to the change that must come about in their fiscal policy if such a treaty as this was entered into. He was not frightened at all at the prospect of the change, as he believed that the advantages they would gain would be more than commensurate with any other form of taxation which would require to be brought into operation. (Hear, hear.) He would therefore give the subject his warmest attention, and he thought he could promise, on behalf of the Government, that they would also very cordially assist in the movement. He might state in regard to New South Wales that he was sorry to find in course of a visit there last year, that the Ministry there were not at all in accord with us in this matter at that time, and he was almost afraid that the present time would be still worse. He might say, however, that he had still hopes of doing something with Queensland. He had mentioned the subject privately to the Hon. the Treasurer of Queensland, and it was just possible that something might be the outcome of it very shortly after the close of the Parliamentary Session in either of the colonies. He recognised the great importance of reciprocity to Tasmania, as he felt convinced that there were many industries that were now languishing, and would almost die out in Tasmania unless something was done to help them. He believed it would be for the benefit of all if they could enter into treaties of this kind, and on behalf of the Government, he assured them that the subject would have their most careful consideration.

MR. MACFARLANE said that the object of the deputation was not to tie the hands of the Government in any way, but merely to affirm the general principle, and impress upon the Government the importance of giving it attention.

THE TREASURER: I thoroughly understand that.

MR. MACFARLANE having thanked the Treasurer on behalf of those present, the deputation withdrew.

Treasury, Hobart, 30th November, 1886.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to state that on the 2nd instant a very influential deputation waited upon me to urge the desirability of the Government of this Colony taking steps to open negotiations with the Colonies of New South Wales and Queensland with a view to establishing reciprocal trade relations with the Colonies referred to.

It was explained to the deputation that the Government of this Colony fully recognised the great importance of bringing about arrangements for the interchange of articles derived or manufactured locally from local natural products of either Colony, and the deputation was informed that negotiations would be opened with New South Wales and Queensland in order to ascertain how far the respective Governments would be inclined to favour proposals for an interchange of the products of Tasmania and the Colonies referred to.

I have now the honor to request that you will be good enough to cause communications to be addressed to the Colonies of New South Wales and Queensland, soliciting an expression of opinion on the subject of reciprocity with Tasmania, and explain that in the event of the proposal being favourably entertained this Government will be prepared to enter more fully into the subject.

I have, &c.

W. H. BURGESS, *Treasurer.*

The Hon. the Premier.

Premier's Office, Hobart, 4th December, 1886.

SIR,

THE advantages which would result from increased facilities for the interchange of articles derived or manufactured locally from local natural products between this Colony and Queensland having recently been brought under the notice of the Government by a large and influential deputation, I am induced to address you on the subject with a view to initiating negotiations which, it is hoped, may ultimately lead to reciprocal action for the removal of existing fiscal obstacles to the extension of Intercolonial trade.

Feeling assured that you fully appreciate the mutual benefits which would result from a more liberal adjustment of tariffs, so far as the Colonies are concerned, I am led to hope that this first step in the direction indicated may meet with favourable consideration.

I shall be glad if you will be good enough to acquaint me with the views of your Government as regards the desirability of taking such action in the matter as may lead to the removal of causes at present acting prejudicially to the development of commercial intercourse between the Colonies.

I have, &c.

J. W. AGNEW.

The Honorable the Premier, Queensland.

Premier's Office, Hobart, 18th February, 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to draw your attention to my letter of the 4th December last, with reference to the initiation of negotiations with the object of removing fiscal obstacles to the extension of Inter-colonial trade.

The subject is one of such importance that, in the event of a favourable response from your Government, and with a view to some definite action being taken in the direction desired during the next Session of Parliament, I shall be glad if you will acquaint me as soon as convenient with the views of your Government as regards the proposals contained in my letter before referred to.

I have, &c.

J. W. AGNEW.

The Honorable the Premier, Queensland.

TELEGRAM.

Brisbane, 16th May, 1887.

Your letter 4th December *re* Intercolonial Trade mislaid. Kindly send copy.

COLONIAL SECRETARY, *Queensland.*

Hon. the Premier.

Premier's Office, Hobart, 17th May, 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your telegram of the 16th instant, requesting to be furnished with a copy of my predecessor's letter of the 4th December last on the subject of Inter-colonial Trade.

In compliance with your desire, I have much pleasure in supplying you with a copy of this communication, and I hope that I may shortly be favoured with an expression of the views of your Government on this important question.

I have, &c.

P. O. FYSH.

The Honorable the Premier, Queensland.

Queensland.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 7th June, 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th ultimo, forwarding a copy of a communication addressed to the Premier of this Colony by your predecessor on the 4th of December last, in which he expressed a desire to initiate negotiations with the object of removing the existing fiscal obstacles to the extension of intercolonial trade as between Tasmania and Queensland.

As the information at present in possession of this Government is insufficient to enable them to give any opinion on the merits of Mr. Agnew's proposals for a more liberal adjustment of the Tariff, I shall be glad if you will favour me with a list of articles, the produce or manufacture of Tasmania, which in your opinion might be admitted duty free into Queensland, and at the same time inform me to what extent the manufactures of this Colony would be allowed a similar concession as regards Tasmania.

I have, &c.

H. H. MORETON.

The Hon. the Premier, Tasmania.

Premier's Office, Hobart, 13th August, 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th June last, in reference to the question of reciprocity in Intercolonial trade, and, in allusion to previous correspondence on this subject, requesting to be informed specifically as to the articles concerning which alterations in the Tariffs of the Colonies of Queensland and Tasmania are desired.

I have been requested by my colleague, the Honorable the Treasurer, to forward in reply the accompanying communication which he addressed to me on the 10th instant, stating the products and manufactures of this Colony respecting which a readjustment of your Tariff is desired, and also enumerating articles of Queensland production in regard to which this Government would be prepared to make fiscal concessions.

I have, &c.

P. O. FYSH.

The Honorable the Premier, Queensland.

Treasury, Hobart, 10th August, 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to request that you will forward to the Government of Queensland this communication in reply to the letter of the Chief Secretary of that Colony, dated 7th June last, regarding proposals for the extension of Intercolonial Trade between Queensland and Tasmania.

The request has been preferred that a list should be supplied of "the articles, the produce or manufacture of Tasmania, which, in the opinion of the Tasmanian Government, might be admitted duty free into Queensland;" and also that information should be afforded as "to what extent the products of Queensland would be allowed a similar concession as regards Tasmania."

The list of natural and manufactured products of Tasmania which could be supplied to Queensland embraces fruit—green and preserved, flour, wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, hops, bark, timber, coal, horses, cattle, sheep, hay, soap, candles, soda, leather, slates, malt liquors, boots, and woollen goods.

Of the unmanufactured products above named, fruit—green and preserved, oats, barley, potatoes, hops, bark, timber, hay are the only articles which we produce at present in excess of our own requirements; and of manufactured articles, jam, soap, candles, malt liquors, and woollen goods are at present the only articles that would be likely to supply an export trade with Queensland. But it might reasonably be expected that if reciprocity in trade were established on terms mutually advantageous to both Colonies, increased production of many of the articles named would not only be encouraged but secured, and so a growing trade would be fostered, necessitating the establishment of a constant direct communication between the colonies, which would, as a matter of course, prove profitable to both.

In return for any concessions made by Queensland in regard to the above-named products, Tasmania would, doubtless, be ready to offer concessions to Queensland in regard to such of her products as could find a market here. Chief among these is the very important and valuable product of sugar, as to which we may be able to offer considerable advantage, while, with regard to most, if not all, other products of Queensland such as Tasmania might require, we would be ready to offer all the freedom of trade which is sought by ourselves in regard to the products of Tasmania.

Of sugar, the annual consumption in this Colony may be stated in round figures at 6000 tons. The money value of this at the port of export would be, at the present low price, £100,000.

In considering the concession which it might be possible to make in regard to sugar, it is necessary for me to state that, as the Tasmanian Tariff is imposed almost entirely for revenue purposes, it is not likely that the exigencies of the Treasury in the near future will permit of an entirely free port for sugar. But if the concessions that Queensland will desire in return for concessions made to us can be regarded as relating to the money value of the trade, and not solely to a free interchange of goods, we may find a satisfactory basis for reciprocity: for, even though the supply to Tasmania of Queensland products were limited to sugar, the differential duty which we are at liberty to levy under "The Australian Colonies Duties Act, 1873," 36 and 37 Vict. Chap. 22, and our own "Intercolonial Customs Duties Act," 37 Vict. No. 10, would, without a doubt, speedily result satisfactorily for Queensland, for the money value of the sugar which Tasmania, under such a differential duty, would be likely to take from Queensland would probably exceed for many years the money value of all Tasmanian products exported to Queensland.

On sugar we collect £6 per ton at present, and it is not probable that for some time to come we shall attempt to reduce the tariff. A differential duty of £4 per ton in favour of Queensland—a difference which may be stated as one-third concession, whatever the present or the future tariff may be—would practically give Queensland a monopoly of the trade in this article in Tasmania.

Possibly there are other Queensland products as to which valuable concessions may be made in the interests of trade between that Colony and Tasmania. In view, therefore, of the importance of the whole question, and the probability of large benefit accruing to both Colonies by such an interchange of commodities as is herein suggested, I venture to express the hope that the Government of Queensland will favourably consider these suggestions, and that further correspondence may prepare the way for a commercial treaty which, when agreed to, shall largely contribute to the prosperity of each of the contracting Colonies.

I have, &c.

B. STAFFORD BIRD, *Treasurer.*

The Hon. the Premier.

Queensland.
Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 25th August, 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th instant, enclosing copy of a letter from your colleague the Treasurer, stating the articles in respect to which alterations in the Tariffs of Tasmania and Queensland are desired, with a view to the extension of trade between the two Colonies, and to inform you that the question raised in this correspondence will receive the early consideration of this Government.

I have, &c.

S. W. GRIFFITH.

The Honorable the Premier of Tasmania, Hobart.