

(No. 71.)



1873.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

**LAUNCESTON AND WESTERN RAILWAY
RATE:**

PETITION FROM INHABITANTS OF LAUNCESTON AGAINST.

Presented by Mr. Aikenhead, October 14; and ordered by the Council to be printed,
October 15, 1873.



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

The Petition of the undersigned Landholders, Tenants, and Occupiers in the Town of Launceston.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH :

1. THAT, under the Law of Tasmania as it at present stands, your Petitioners are held liable for a Rate on the annual value of Property owned or occupied by them to meet Interest on the capital sum expended in the construction of the Launceston and Western Railway.

2. That the said Launceston and Western Railway is a public work of great national importance, communicating with the most extensive producing District in Tasmania, and in the maintenance of which the people of Tasmania are all interested.

3. That the said Launceston and Western Railway constitutes an important section of the Grand Trunk Railway System from Hobart Town to the North-west Coast.

4. That it was originally proposed the said Railway should be constructed as a national work by the Government of the day, at the cost of the General Revenue of the Colony ; but that, owing to the state of party feeling in the Colony at the time, such proposal was rejected by Parliament.

5. That, after many years of agitation, the said Railway was constructed by a public Company, the Shareholders of which subscribed the sum of £50,000 towards the cost of such Railway,—the remainder of the construction money being raised by an issue of Colonial Debentures.

6. That, as a condition of such issue, a proportion of the Property-holders in a special Railway District bound themselves by vote, upon certain terms, to submit to a Rate upon their properties to cover the interest upon the said capital sum raised by Debentures.

7. That many of your Petitioners, and all who occupy the position of tenants, had no vote or voice in imposing this Rate, which has now become a heavy and ruinous tax upon a limited District.

8. That such of your Petitioners as did vote in favour of the Rate, did so under the distinct understanding and belief that the Parliament of the Colony had adopted the principle of re-guarantee as the only principle upon which it would sanction the construction of Railways in Tasmania,—a belief in which they are fully sustained by the recorded speeches of the late and present Colonial Treasurers of Tasmania.

9. That the principle alluded to has been departed from by the Parliament of Tasmania, which has sanctioned the construction of a Railway between Hobart Town and Launceston without providing for any special re-guarantee, but making the whole interest liability a charge upon the General Revenue.

10. That in addition to the sum of £50,000, part of the cost of the Railway above referred to subscribed by the Shareholders of the Launceston and Western Railway Company, half the cost of the original Survey was borne by Residents in the District ; and your Petitioners have, under an Act passed by your Honorable House in the Session of 1872, 36 Vict. No. 20, contributed a Rate equal to One Shilling in the Pound on the value of their properties towards the payment of interest due in the current year.

11. That your Petitioners paid this Rate under the belief that the Ministry of the day was pledged during the recent recess to consider the whole question of Tasmanian Railway Legislation, and to submit to Parliament an equitable general principle under which all Railway liabilities should be dealt with for the future.

12. That your Petitioners regret to find the Ministry has not fulfilled this implied pledge, but has proposed to your Honorable House to continue the levy of a special Railway Rate in the Launceston and Western Railway District during the current half of the year 1873, and also during the year 1874.

13. That your Petitioners consider the levy of such Rates, under the circumstances, would be unjust and oppressive,—seeing that the interest on the Main Line Railway now being constructed is proposed to be capitalised and made a charge upon the Revenue of the whole Colony.

14. That your Petitioners further believe the continued levy of such special local Rates for a work of national importance most impolitic, as tending to oppress and impoverish individuals, and to cripple the efforts of many small and struggling settlers in one of the largest and most important agricultural Districts of Tasmania, in the welfare and prosperity of which the inhabitants of the Colony at large are immediately and greatly interested.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that your Honorable House will take the premises into your most serious consideration; and, seeing that the principle of national liability for the cost of Railways is already admitted by the Government of the day, that you will be pleased at once to authorise the relief of the Launceston and Western Railway District from the payment of further special Rates, and to adopt one general and equitable principle for covering the interest liability of the Colony on account of Railways.

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

[*Here follow 1187 Signatures.*]