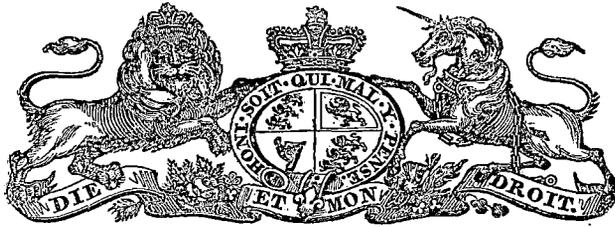


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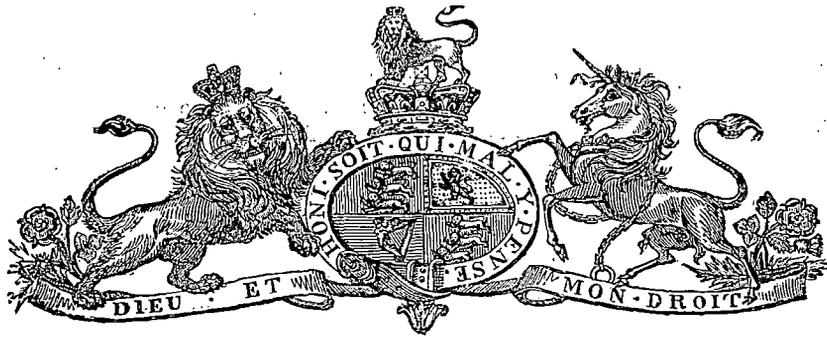
1856.

T A S M A N I A.

M I N U T E.

RESIGNATION OF MR. GREGSON'S MINISTRY.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Attorney-General, and ordered by the Council to
be printed, 28 May, 1857.



Davey-street, 16th April, 1857.

SIR,

IN consequence of the vote which passed the House of Assembly on the 14th instant, we feel it right to tender to Your Excellency the resignation of the Offices we respectively hold.

We have the honor to be,
&c. &c.

THOS. GEO. GREGSON, *Colonial Secretary.*
J. C. GREGSON, *Attorney-General.*
CHARLES MEREDITH, *Colonial Treasurer.*
JNO. H. WEDGE,
JAMES WHYTE, } *Executive Councillors.*
MAXWELL MILLER, }

To His Excellency the Governor.

Government House, Hobart Town, 16th April, 1857.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this date, tendering, by reason of the vote of the House of Assembly on the 14th instant, the resignation of the Offices which you respectively hold.

I regret to state that it appears to me to be my duty, under these circumstances, to inform you that your resignations will be accepted so soon as Successors to your several Offices shall be obtained; and I request that until then you will do me the favour to continue in the charge of your respective duties.

I have the honour to be,
&c. &c.

H. E. F. YOUNG.

The Hon. T. G. GREGSON, Colonial Secretary.
J. C. GREGSON, Attorney-General.
CHAS. MEREDITH, Colonial Treasurer.
J. H. WEDGE,
JAS. WHYTE, } *Executive Councillors.*
MAXWELL MILLER, }

MEMORANDUM.

THE vote arrived at on Tuesday night by the House of Assembly renders it necessary for the Responsible Advisers of the Governor to place their Offices at his disposal. In the ordinary routine of Parliamentary proceedings, a specific vote of want of confidence carried against the Ministry would be naturally followed by the immediate resignation of their posts. There are circumstances, however, in this instance which, in the opinion of Mr. Gregson and his colleagues, justify them in departing from the course usually adopted, and in tendering to His Excellency advice which would preclude the necessity for the present of any change of Administration.

Mr. Gregson would first briefly refer to the grounds on which exception has been taken to His Excellency's present Executive Advisers. They are as follows. First, it is asserted that the Ministry will not be able to carry into effect their policy as set forth in the Memorandum of the 24th March. Secondly, that the estimated realisation of a sum of £320,000 by the sale of 160,000 acres of waste land is a gross financial error; and, thirdly, that the proposed reductions in the Public Service cannot be carried into effect. These are the chief points of difference, so far as the prospective measures of the Administration are concerned.

The refusal of the Ministry to comply with the joint Address from the two Houses, praying for the payment of Public Salaries in anticipation of the Appropriation Bill, and the personal demeanour of certain of the Ministers in their places in Parliament, are the reasons assigned for the disapprobation expressed by the vote of Tuesday night of their past acts as a Responsible Cabinet.

As far as their proposed measures are concerned, Mr. Gregson and his colleagues believe that they are at once popular and practicable. He is firmly convinced that the great majority of the Electoral Body throughout the Island approve of the policy enunciated in the Minute he had the honour of submitting to Your Excellency, and is satisfied that most of the reforms it suggests can be carried into effect. There is, in fact, an obvious variance between the opinion of the majority of the Assembly and the Constituencies which they represent.

The Assembly sanctioned by its votes an addition to the fiscal burthens of the country: the Constituencies protested against such additional burthens. The Assembly authorised the maintenance of the enormous Establishments and extravagant expenditure which have been the gradual growth of irresponsible Government. The Constituencies of the Island, with scarcely an exception of importance, remonstrated by Address and Petition against the proceedings of their Representatives; and now, when there is a Ministry in power that is prepared to carry out the public demand for Retrenchment before additional Taxation is resorted to, the House of Assembly declares that it does not possess their confidence.

Under these circumstances His Excellency's Advisers are prepared to incur the responsibility of recommending an appeal from the decision of the Assembly to the decision of the Country.

They feel confident that the Assembly as a body does not represent the opinions of the Constituencies of the Island. They sanctioned a Tariff which was universally denounced; and have, up to the present time, been at issue with the general Electoral Body on the first great question of common public interest which has arisen since the meeting of Parliament four months ago.

But there are other and equally serious considerations which induce Your Excellency's Advisers to tender this advice.

The state of parties in the Assembly as evidenced by the whole course of the present Session, and the resignation of one Ministry and the defeat of a second in so short a period, show the impossibility of selecting from the present Parliament a really strong Government, that is to say,—a Government which would be enabled to command a reliable working majority in the Assembly for the support of its general policy and ordinary measures.

Mr. Champ's Administration, though strengthened by a coalition which seemed calculated to ensure its stability, was constantly weakened by petty defeats, and was eventually compelled to abandon its principal financial measures through the absence of distinct and positive support from a recognized body of adherents in the Assembly.

The present Ministry, placed in office by the effect of a vote of the House, and possessing, as they have good reason to believe they do, the confidence of the Colony, have never been in a position to command a majority in the Assembly, and are now refused the opportunity of maturing their measures and developing their policy before Parliament.

It is obvious, therefore, that the realisation of that which is so indispensably necessary for the prosperity and the preservation of the Public Credit of the Country,—namely, a strong Government,—is unattainable with the present elements of Parliamentary organisation. The Country is, consequently, not only subjected to the calamity of a weak Government, but seems threatened with a succession of weak Governments.

To prevent such a contingency a Dissolution seems the only practical remedy. A General Election at the present moment would be almost certain to result in the return of a majority of Members pledged strongly one way or the other on the great question of Retrenchment and Reform, upon which the Assembly and the present Ministry are now at issue.

It only remains to consider the cost to the country, and the inconvenience to the Public Service, which may be occasioned by the dissolution of the House of Assembly. The expense would be trifling, in all probability not more than a few hundred pounds.

The public inconvenience would be scarcely greater than that which would be attendant on the re-election of a new Ministry. At least a month would be lost in this way, and very little longer time would be required for a General Election to take place.

The fact that the Appropriation Bill as amended by the Council is now before the Assembly has not escaped the attention of the Ministry.

With that measure Ministers are, of course, not now in a position to proceed; and under any circumstances its passage through the Assembly seems not unlikely to be retarded for some time by discussions on the right of the Legislative Council to alter and amend Money Bills. With the prospect of a long postponement of this Bill, Mr. Gregson and his colleagues would be inclined to advise His Excellency to re-consider the decision recently arrived at with respect to the payment of Public Salaries. Should His Excellency consent to do so, a General Election would not prove, as far as this important matter is concerned, so detrimental to the public interest as would a change of Administration.

Impressed with these considerations, Mr. Gregson would now respectfully urge upon His Excellency—as the collective advice of his Executive Council arrived at after deep and anxious deliberation—the necessity of dissolving the House of Assembly. They believe their duty to His Excellency, to the country, and to themselves compels them to offer this advice.

Should His Excellency decline to adopt the course they recommend, it only remains for Mr. Gregson and his colleagues most respectfully to tender the resignation of their offices and seats in the Executive Council.

Ordered to be printed, 28 May, 1857.

JAMES BARNARD,
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.