

(No. 55.)



1861.

T A S M A N I A.

A D V A L O R E M D U T I E S.

P E T I T I O N.

Presented by Mr. Carter, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
21 January, 1862.



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

The humble Petition of the undersigned Residents in Hobart Town, Importers of Manufactured Goods, and others interested therein, against the passing into Law of the Bill to increase the Duties of Customs.

SHOWETH :

THAT by a Bill, No. 52, intituled "A Bill to increase the Duties of Customs," now under the consideration of your Honorable Council, it is contemplated, amongst other items, to raise Revenue by a system of *ad Valorem* Duties upon certain imported Articles of Merchandise.

That, whilst your Petitioners recognise the present Financial condition of the Government renders it expedient that Revenue should be raised by levying additional Duties, they respectfully protest against the adoption of the *ad Valorem* system for that purpose, upon the following grounds:—

1st. That the *ad Valorem* system of levying Duties has been only lately rejected by the Parliament of Victoria; and, after a long trial by Adelaide and New Zealand, it has been abolished as a system that is irksome, demoralizing, and intolerable.

2nd. The inconvenience, delay, and extra expense to Importers, irrespective of the damage that would accrue to their Goods by being opened on the Wharves or in the Queen's Warehouses for examination and valuation.

3rd. The door that would be opened to unfair valuations, antagonism, and collusion between Custom Officers and Merchants; the encouragement to favoritism, bribery, and fraud.

4th. The impossibility of procuring a competent Appraiser for the different kind of Goods.

5th. The highly disadvantageous effect it would have on the Commercial prosperity of this Country, considered in relation to the adjoining Colonies where no such Duties are levied, by the check that would be given to those wholesome exchanges of Surplus Stocks which have hitherto been so beneficial to the Trading and Shipping Communities.

6th. The difficulty of devising any system of Drawback on Goods shipped to New Zealand and elsewhere, which must be allowed to enable this Colony to successfully compete with Victoria and New South Wales.

7th. That Schedule No. 2 of the said Bill contains a List of Exemptions exhibiting a strong tendency to class legislation and unfairness to Importers of those Goods selected for impost,—contrary to the spirit of a free and enlightened system, where it is recognized that all should contribute equally to the general expense of Government.

8th. That, whilst by the general principle of the Bill the assessment is proposed to be made according to the value at the Port of Importation, it would be inconsistent to enact Clause 3 giving power to the Collectors to require production of Invoices as a test of value, the Invoice price being frequently no test whatever of the value at the Place of Importation, upon the principle that an article will only sell for what it is worth.

9th. That there are no provisions for abatement of Duty on damaged Goods; and that the provisions for assessing value, on disputes between the Officers of Customs and the Importer, are not sufficiently defined for the protection of the latter. That such Rules and Regulations as may be necessary for the due carrying out of the Bill should be made by Parliament, and their nature and probable effect be at once before the Country, instead of passing so vague a Bill with powers to the Executive to make them. The mode of fixing the true and real value, your Petitioners submit, should be settled by Parliament.

10th. That the increased staff and conveniences requisite for effectively carrying out the *ad Valorem* system would be attended with great expense, and thus fail to realize the amount desired to be raised by the introduction of this Bill, as it should be borne in mind that an efficient number of Officers must necessarily be stationed at all the Ports to prevent smuggling by the means of passengers' baggage, and on the Coast, for which the measure offers too considerable encouragement.

And therefore your Petitioners respectfully and earnestly pray that the said Bill may not pass into Law.

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

[Here follow 551 Signatures.]