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[SECOND SESSION.]

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T A S M A N I A.

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DEFENCES OF THE COLONY.

REPORT FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE.

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Brought up by Mr. Lette, and ordered by the House to be printed,  
2 September, 1863.



*THE JOINT COMMITTEE appointed to enquire into and report upon the Defences of the Colony have the honor to bring up the following.*

## R E P O R T.

THE Committee have had under their consideration a variety of official documents and Parliamentary Papers bearing upon the subject of their enquiry, but have not deemed it necessary or desirable to take any additional evidence.

The subject of Colonial Defences has, for many years past, occupied the attention of the Government and the Legislature.

In 1854 a Select Committee of the Legislative Council was appointed to consider a Message from the Lieutenant-Governor on the subject of the Defence of the Towns and Harbours of the Colony. (*Legislative Council, V.D.L, 1854, No. 15.*)

In 1858 His Excellency's Ministers brought the subject of Colonial Defences specially under the notice of the Governor, and called for a Report on the same subject from Colonel Broughton, Commanding Royal Engineer. These Papers were laid before both Houses of Parliament. (*H.A. Tasmania, 1858, No. 64*)

In 1860 a Joint Committee of both Houses brought up a Report on the best means of placing Tasmania in a position to defend itself from aggression from foreign foes. (*H.A. Tasmania, 1860, No. 110.*)

In April of the same year, the Governor commissioned a Board of Officers to enquire into and report upon the condition and efficiency of the Volunteer Force in Tasmania. The Report of the Board has been presented to Parliament by His Excellency. (*H.A. Tasmania, 1863, No. 48.*)

The Committee have also had under their consideration two Memoranda on this subject from the pen of His Excellency the Governor, dated respectively the 26th August, 1863, and the 21st August, 1863.

From a Circular Despatch from the Duke of Newcastle to the Governors of the Australian Colonies, dated 26th June, 1863, and communicated to Parliament this Session, it appears that H.M. Government is prepared to maintain a Military Force of 260 Officers and men in Tasmania at the expense of Great Britain.

Applications for Gun-boats and a Company of Artillery had been previously declined by the Secretary of State.

It must, therefore, be assumed that the amount of Military Force indicated in the Duke of Newcastle's last Despatch on this subject, is the maximum that can be expected from the liberality or the sense of justice of the British Government.

Any further addition to the Military Defence of the Colony must be supplied by the patriotism, and at the expense, of its inhabitants.

The Committee, under these circumstances, can only recommend that, so far as concerns the general protection of the Colony from the concentration of any number of ships in an attack on this part of Her Majesty's Dominions, in case of Foreign War, reliance must be placed upon the Naval Force of Great Britain, which has been described by the Duke of Newcastle as of almost "unexampled magnitude and efficiency." (*Circular Despatch, 26 December, 1861.*)

For protection against the possible predatory attack of a single Privateer or of a regular Cruiser, in case of a War with America or with other Marine Powers, the Colony must rely on the completeness and efficiency of its Land Defence.

The geographical position, and the intricacies of the river navigation in the neighbourhood of Launceston, render it extremely improbable that the Northern Capital will ever be exposed to insult or aggression of the character indicated above, and the preparation for its Defence proportionately simple and inexpensive.

The situation of Hobart Town, on the broad estuary of the Derwent, offers unusual facilities for attack to an active and enterprising enemy. The Committee deem it essential to the safety of the Capital, that the existing batteries should be completed and strengthened by the addition of not less than Four long-range Guns, constructed on the latest model, and on the most approved principles of scientific Artillery.

That a Gun-boat should be maintained on this Station, at the expense of the Colony, for the especial Defence of Hobart Town, on the principles suggested in His Excellency's Memo., dated 21 August, 1863; and that every effort should be made to render the Volunteer Force really and practically available and efficient for purposes of National Defence, particular attention being paid to the formation and improvement of a trained body of Artillery.

The Committee append a Series of Resolutions, being the embodiment of their deliberate conclusions and final suggestions on the subject of their enquiry.

JAMES MILNE WILSON, *Chairman.*

*Committee Room, 2 September, 1863.*

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## RESOLUTIONS.

1. That, for purposes of Defence of the Colony, this Committee is of opinion that it is desirable to procure not more than 6 Guns of large calibre, of the latest improvement, from Great Britain as early as possible.
2. That, to prevent a blockade by a single vessel, for the defence of the shipping, and in time of war, the presence of a Ship of War or Gun-boat is essential. To obtain this advantage, the Committee is of opinion that the Local Government should ask Her Majesty's Government to station a Gun-boat (or such other vessel as may be convenient) fully armed and manned in the Derwent. The vessel to be under the orders of the Senior Naval Officer on the Australian Station, who may exchange her or order her away in times of peace, but that in time of war one such vessel shall always be in the waters of the Derwent. A subsidy towards the maintenance of such vessel to be paid by the Local Government, by agreement, for a term of years; and that His Excellency be requested to address the Secretary of State upon the subject.
3. That the Committee, having had under its consideration the Despatch of the Duke of Newcastle to His Excellency Colonel Thomas Gore Browne, C.B., dated 26th June, 1863, expresses its concurrence in the distribution and maintenance of the Troops as regards Tasmania.
4. That the Volunteer Force ought to be maintained, and steps taken to render it as efficient as possible.