

(No. 78.)



1873.

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TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

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VACCINATION BILL.

PETITION FROM MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS.

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Presented by Dr. Butler, 16 July, 1873, and ordered by the House to be printed.



*To the Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly of  
Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.*

The humble Petition of the undersigned

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH.

That your Petitioners hail with gratitude the introduction of a Bill before your Honorable House to "amend the Law relating to Vaccination."

That your Petitioners are fully convinced that the Bill before your Honorable House, with some alterations and additions, would, if duly carried into execution, effect the vaccination of the many thousands of native-born Tasmanians hitherto unvaccinated, and also ensure the regular vaccination of those born after the Act should become law.

That your Petitioners would therefore respectfully suggest that Clause 4 should, in addition thereto, provide for a regular weekly supply of pure vaccine lymph from well-selected cases for the use of all the Public Vaccinators. This, according to the best authority, can only be secured in a concentrated population of from 25,000 to 50,000 persons by the establishment of one public vaccination station, which ought to have at least ten infants under six months old to vaccinate every week. Hobarton alone in this Island could furnish this number. Last year the registered births were 718; and, of course, out of that number many parents would prefer having their children vaccinated by their private medical attendants, who are rarely able to perform the operation direct from arm to arm, that being admitted to be the most perfect and satisfactory mode of communicating the vaccine infection. During the three and a quarter years, from 1st October, 1863, to the 31st January, 1867, when a public vaccinating establishment of the kind indicated existed, every Medical Practitioner in the Island was enabled to procure therefrom a supply of vaccine lymph of unexceptionable quality.

That Clauses 7 and 8, if they include children and others unvaccinated born previous to the Amended Act coming into operation, would only require in addition a provision for the re-vaccination of all persons about the age of puberty, say about fifteen years old, as laid down by the instructions issued by the Medical Officer of the Privy Council. The necessity of re-vaccination at the age of puberty has been additionally illustrated by the late fearful epidemic of small-pox in England.

That Clause 9 should, after the word "thereafter," have added, "or refuses to let the vaccinator take from such child whatever amount of vaccine lymph he thinks fit." Experience shows that many selfish persons neglected to return their children for examination on the eighth day to prevent lymph being taken from them; and that many others, when they did bring back their children, objected strongly to any lymph being taken from them. Unless a paragraph of this import is inserted they could set the vaccinators at defiance, and disable him from continuing to vaccinate others.

That Clause 15 is unnecessary, Clause 11 in connection with Clause 16 being amply sufficient to ensure the due registration of the vaccination. So much certifying on the part of the vaccinator was much objected to by the Medical Practitioners in Scotland, and caused many to decline the office of vaccinator.

That Clause 22 is very invidious to Medical Practitioners. In the Bill which passed the Legislative Council of Tasmania in August, 1865, Clause 25 to a similar effect included "any Vaccinator, Medical Practitioner, Registrar, or Deputy Registrar;" but surely so stringent a measure cannot be necessary while the Executive Government have the power of censure and dismissal in their hands. This clause gave great offence to the Medical Practitioners in the Scotch Vaccination Act, and many of those who had been in the habit previously of vaccinating the children of all their own patients ceased thereafter to practise vaccination altogether.

That Clause 24 does not say who is to prosecute parents or custodians of children for neglecting to have their children vaccinated within six months of birth. If this duty is not specially provided for, the Act in all probability will become a dead letter as the existing Act is. The 1865 Bill said:—"All penalties imposed by this Act may be recovered, &c. upon complaint of the Registrar, or if he deems fit of the Deputy-Registrar of the District where the offence is committed, or some other person to be appointed by him for such purpose," &c. The Registrars of Births being also the Registrars of Vaccinations are alone possessed of the necessary data for prosecuting defaulters. Medical Practitioners will not be either informers or prosecutors in such cases. In England the Guardians of the poor have to appoint a prosecutor and enforce prosecutions. The Privy Council had often to take stringent measures to compel Guardians to act in this matter.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that your Honorable House will take these respectful suggestions into its consideration and embody them in the Bill to be enacted.

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

EDWARD SWARBRECK HALL, *Medical Practitioner.*

J. W. AGNEW, *M.D.*

THOS. C. SMART, *M.R.C.S.E.*

J. EDWARDS, *M.R.C.S.E.*

R. S. BRIGHT, *M.R.C.S. Eng., &c.*

ROBT. WM. CARNS, *M.D.*