

(No. 17.)



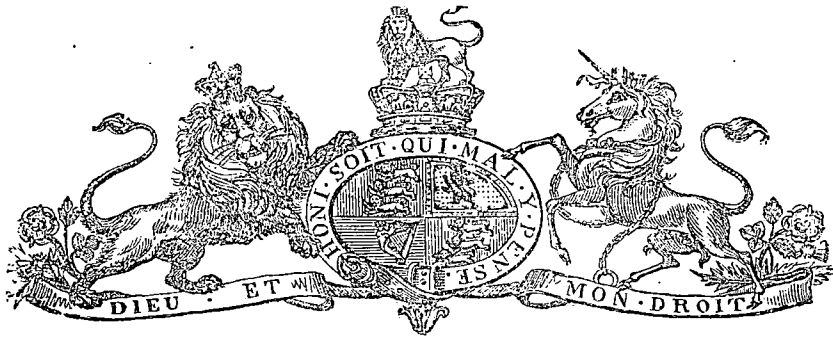
1863.

TASMANIA.
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENTS.

REPORT OF COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN SIDE.

Laid on the Table by Mr. Whyte, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
June 26, 1863.



To His Excellency Colonel THOMAS GORE BROWNE, Companion of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the Island of Tasmania and its Dependencies.

WHEREAS by a certain Instrument in writing bearing date the Ninth day of February, One thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, under the hand of Your Excellency, and addressed to us whose names are appended to this our Report, We, Your Excellency's Commissioners, appointed by the aforesaid Instrument, having, in obedience to the instructions therein contained carefully investigated the mode of liquidating Public Accounts, and of conducting the public business in the various Departments of the Civil Service in the Northern portion of the Island, and the number, duties, and remuneration of the Officers of such Departments; and having received all such evidence as was tendered to us, and such other evidence as was in our opinion necessary for our arriving at a correct opinion in the several matters brought under our notice, humbly offer to Your Excellency the following

R E P O R T .

1. We find that the Accounts in the several Offices are kept and regulated by the instructions of the Heads of the several Departments in Hobart Town, and upon the same system in operation there. In several of the Offices the monies received are under the control of the officials for a lengthened period, until Abstracts are periodically furnished, when the Cheque of the Head of such Department is forwarded for the amount. We therefore recommend that each Office should daily, or weekly, pay the Receipts into an account at one of the Colonial Banks, and which monies should only be withdrawn by the Colonial Treasurer, and that duplicate Deposit Receipts should be sent with the Abstracts instead of Cheques or Cash. (See Rider A. at the end.)

Mode of keeping Public Accounts.

2. There is at present in operation a system of Classification of certain of the Civil Servants, accompanied by an annual augmentation of Salary, until a maximum of the Salary in each Class has been reached. This system was, no doubt, introduced for the purpose of encouraging a superior class of persons to enter and remain in the Public Service; but when we look to the actual result of this system we find that no such advantage as that contemplated has been obtained, partly in consequence of the inconsiderable number of the Classified Clerks, and partly because it chiefly embraces within its operation those whose duties are simply routine clerical duties, demanding no superior capacity. But, whilst the State reaps no profits from the further continuance of the system, we find that the public have to pay under it an unnecessary amount of remuneration for the duties to be discharged. We therefore recommend that each Officer should be engaged for that particular service he is to fill, with an adequate fixed Salary; and all vacancies which may occur should be filled by those occupying inferior positions in the Service, and who may be recommended for promotion by a faithful and efficient discharge of their duties.

Classification.

3. We also deprecate the continuance of the present system of Pensions and Superannuation Allowances on retirement.

Pensions.

4. Whenever for the purpose of consolidating and placing under one Office the duties of several distinct Offices, we would suggest that to facilitate the separation of such Offices, at any future time, when from the increase of business in any one of such Offices, or for other reasons, a separation should be found expedient, the whole Salary of the Officer performing the consolidated duties should be attached to his most important

Consolidation of Offices.

employment, and that he should be required to discharge all other duties cast upon him gratuitously.

Hours of attendance at Public Offices.

5. Your Commissioners have no reason for concluding that any alteration in the hours of attendance at the Public Offices would be attended with any advantage to the Public Service.

Security for the faithful discharge of duty.

6. We are of opinion that, for the public security, every Officer who is entrusted with the receipt, expenditure, or other control of public monies, should be required to give security to the Colonial Treasurer for the faithful discharge of that trust.

CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT.

7. Your Commissioners find that the strength of this Department is not beyond its absolute requirements, nor is the remuneration of any Officer greater than should be fairly paid for the work performed by him. All the witnesses concurred in bearing testimony to the zeal and efficient discharge of the duties of this Department by every one connected with it. The Collector intimated that the services of one Weigher could be dispensed with.

POST OFFICE.

8. This Department is susceptible of no reduction or consolidation; but your Commissioners are of opinion that the receipts might be materially and justly increased by the imposition of a penny postage upon newspapers, which are at present, for some reason to your Commissioners unknown, conveyed through every portion of the Island free of all charges. Your Commissioners would also recommend either the total abolition of the system of Franking by Members of Parliament, or its limitation to the actual sitting of the Parliament. The only complaint made to your Commissioners as to this Department had reference to the interval between the closing of the Foreign Mails and the sailing of the Steamers, which the Merchants were of opinion might conveniently be shortened.

PRINTING DEPARTMENT.

9. This Department has no office or officers in the North; but a suggestion has been made to your Commissioners, in which they concur, that there is an unnecessary outlay connected with the publication of the *Gazette*. We recommend that the present system of furnishing copies of the *Gazette* to the Clergy and Magistrates should be discontinued, except as regards those Justices of the Peace located in remote Districts; inasmuch as all persons have access to the Public Offices where the *Gazettes* are filed.

Notices might be printed in a condensed form, apart from other matter, and issued to those on the Commission of the Peace.

POLICE.

10. Your Commissioners consider the cost for Police unnecessarily large in the Districts of Selby and George Town.

A considerable portion of the time and labour of the Stipendiary Magistrate and Staff of the Selby Police is occupied with the business of the Launceston Municipality. The Commission consider it would be advantageous to amalgamate the Selby and George Town Districts, retaining one Stipendiary Magistrate, one Clerk, and one District Constable to perform the duties. The limits of the two combined Districts would be much lessened if Carrick were proclaimed a Municipality; and the boundaries of the Launceston Municipality might be extended so as to take in the adjacent villages. The Launceston Municipality should control its own Police, and support the entire Staff. And if this were felt to be burthensome upon the Town, the case might be met by adopting the suggestion to add to the area from which their income is derived.

The Stipendiary Magistrate at George Town has, in addition to his Salary as Magistrate and Coroner, an income of £150 as Health Officer and Medical Attendant upon the Police stationed there. The Commission are satisfied that both these latter Offices may be abolished. In the event of these proposed changes being carried out a saving of more than £1000 per annum will be effected.

It does not appear that there are any important duties performed by the Stipendiary Magistrate for Selby, on behalf of the Imperial Government, which could not be performed by any Magistrate of the territory. The Comptroller-General of Convicts subsidises the Salary of a Clerk of the Municipal Council of Launceston, who supplies passes and furnishes returns referring to Ticket-of-Leave holders.

PENAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

11. Your Commissioners are unable to suggest any extensive modification or diminution of the large staff required for the safe custody and control of prisoners whilst the present Gaol Buildings, with their peculiar and inconvenient arrangements, are allowed to exist. But your Commissioners beg to call attention to the laxity of discipline, want of economy of labour, and superabundance of diet, which characterise the present system of imprisonment with *so called* hard labour as it is in operation in Launceston. Task-work, as a portion of Gaol discipline, appears to have been abandoned, although credit to the extent of four-sixteenths is given for labour so almost valueless, that the Overseer of Public Works in his evidence states that its average worth is under 6*d.* per diem per man.

In the Female House of Correction the labour of the inmates is less valuable still. This state of things your Commissioners believe tends to defeat the chief ends of punishment. Reformation is almost impossible in buildings so ill-arranged that no real classification can take place; whilst, so far from the dread of imprisonment operating as a warning, it is found that numbers voluntarily seek it to ensure warm quarters, good diet, light labour, and medical attendance. Your Commissioners consider that the rations are excessive for persons, comparatively speaking, unemployed. That the labour of the prisoners might be made remunerative, a rigorous system of task-work should be enforced.

A considerable saving to the Revenue would be effected by causing the washing from the Hospital to be performed at the Female House of Correction, where there are appliances for the purpose.

Your Commissioners recommend that the salary attached to the Health Officer and Medical Attendant should be withdrawn and the duties hitherto performed by him should be discharged by the Surgeon of the General Hospital, who could supply and dispense the medicines from that establishment.

Captain Reid stated in his evidence that he considered the salary of the Messenger excessive—5*s.* per diem, including free quarters, whilst the pay of the Second Clerk was only £60.

LAW DEPARTMENT.

12. Your Commissioners are of opinion that the Recorder, who is also Commissioner of the Court of Requests for the District of Launceston, could perform the duties of Commissioner of the Insolvent Court with the assistance of a Registrar; the duties of which latter office could be discharged by the Clerk of the Peace, who could also hold the office of Under Sheriff with the assistance of a Clerk. A considerable saving would be effected if the Recorder were to hold his Courts for the trial of Criminals at intervals of equal distance from the sittings of the Supreme Court; and a suggestion has been offered that it would be a great convenience to the public if the Recorder were to travel on Circuit, and so save Witnesses' Expenses and loss of time.

The staff, in the event of these suggestions being carried out, would stand thus:—

1. Recorder, Commissioner of Court of Requests, Commissioner of Insolvent Court.
2. Clerk of the Peace, Under Sheriff, Registrar of Insolvent Court, Registrar of Court of Requests.
3. Bailiff.
4. Clerk.
5. Crier of the Court.

An efficient Clerk could discharge the duties of Summoning Officer of the Court of Requests, and likewise those of Messenger, at £100 per annum.

Your Commissioners consider the pay attached to the office of Court House Keeper and Crier excessive, £120. The holder of the two appointments having free quarters,

induces them to consider that a salary of £100 per annum would be equivalent to the value of the duties to be performed.

DEPUTY-REGISTRAR OF BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND MARRIAGES.

13. Your Commissioners recommend that the duties connected with this office should be discharged by the Deputy Recorder of Titles.

IMMIGRATION AGENT.

14. Your Commissioners recommend the abolition of this Office at once. In the event of the arrival of any Emigrants whose Tickets require certifying, this duty might be performed by a Special Agent.

GENERAL HOSPITAL.

15. The Surgeon Superintendent should, in the opinion of your Commissioners, perform the duties of Medical Officer at the Gaol, and to the Rural Police, without increase of Salary. Additional accommodation could be afforded in the establishment for invalids by a small outlay in fitting up the Dissecting Theatre and a large attic.

Looking to the falling off of the annual subscriptions which has been going on for some time past, your Commissioners would suggest that the whole Board of Managers should be appointed by the Government, and consist of six members; the Surgeon Superintendent to be Secretary. For the purpose of avoiding professional disputes, your Commissioners deprecate the appointment of Medical men as Managers. The private practitioners always assist and advise at the Hospital when their services are called for. The Members of the Board should be empowered to grant admissions into the Hospital.

LANDS' TITLES COMMISSIONER.

16. The amount of labour in this Office has increased so considerably that your Commissioners recommend that no other Offices should be held by the Deputy Recorder of Titles, except those of Deputy Registrar of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, and Deputy Commissioner of Crown Lands, which last-named Office would be an auxiliary to the first. The duties of the first and last named Offices are becoming exceedingly onerous, and important. Your Commissioners are, therefore, of opinion that the remuneration should be in proportion to the importance of the qualification demanded for a proper exercise of the duties of the Office.

SURVEY DEPARTMENT.

17. In considering this important Department your Commissioners have come to the conclusion that the Deputy Commissioner of Crown Lands should be assisted by the District Surveyor, who should be the Referee in all enquiries connected with this Department, and who should be a person of local experience. A Draughtsman, and Clerk, as at present, could not possibly be dispensed with.

Your Commissioners have appended certain extracts from the evidence of Mr. Ronald Gunn, in order to prove that instructions for Surveys of Lands for sale or selection, and Surveys for Roads on this side of the Island, should at least pass through the Local Office, even if they did not emanate from it; and that District Surveyors in the North should send in their Reports to the Surveyor-General through the Deputy Commissioner here. Your Commissioners are credibly informed that large sums have been expended on the Survey of utterly worthless Lands, and consequently unsaleable. Such errors would have been avoided if the District Surveyors had received their instructions from one having local knowledge.

EXTRACTS from the Evidence of Mr. R. C. Gunn.

“The District Surveyors of the North never communicate with me as to their proceedings. It would be an advantage to the public if they were to receive their instructions through my Office. I do not know the Staff of Surveyors for the North side of the Island.

“The Surveys of Roads were under the sole instruction of the Surveyor-General, and in Dorset and Devon most of them are inapplicable, and have had to be modified to some extent, and some of them are perfectly useless.”

PUBLIC WORKS.

18. With the exception of the Overseer of Public Works, your Commissioners cannot learn that there is any one on the North side to protect the public estate, and look to the preservation of the Public Buildings, Roads, Bridges, &c. A Board of Works was appointed some short time ago, but their powers only extend so far as to assist and advise the Executive in the expenditure of a Parliamentary Grant for the formation of New Roads and Bridges on the North side of the Island. Your Commissioners cannot but feel, in common with others, that there should be some authorised person in whose charge the Crown Lands should be, for the purpose of preventing trespass and denudation of timber, and preserving from injury and decay the Bridges, Roads, and Buildings; also to take care of any stores the property of the Crown.

Whilst reviewing the subject the question arose as to the expediency and advantage of the appointment of a Minister, amenable to Parliament, in whom, for the time being, the Lands and Works of the Crown should be vested. Your Commissioners are persuaded that such an appointment would prevent much of the confusion and loss which now occurs on this side of the Island, and more especially in the Survey Department. True it is that such a Ministerial Officer may possibly be displaced by political changes before an opportunity was afforded him of carrying out his plans; yet the routine of office would be preserved by the permanent appointment of the Heads of the present Departments, who would be Deputies of his Office.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

19. Your Commissioners are of opinion that all local Institutions of a recreative or literary character should be left to private management and support.

The Public Gardens in the Town of Launceston have been aided by a Parliamentary Grant; and the Committee of Management, in extending their improvements, have calculated upon and anticipated this fund, and consequently have run into debt. Your Commissioners are of opinion that the Committee should be aided in liquidating their liability, and the gardens might then be left to the support of the Municipality or the public at large.

THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

20. This Society affords relief to all cases of real distress, and in this capacity interposes between the destitute and the Government. In the absence of poor rates, or until the poor obtain settlements upon the Municipalities, the public funds are cheaply and economically managed by the voluntary labour of the Agents of the Society, and who should be furnished with funds to the extent which the exigencies of the case demand.

R. BYRON MILLER.
ADYE DOUGLAS.*
WM. DODERY.
RICHARD DRY.
ISAAC SHERWIN, *Chairman.*

* With the exception of the suggested alterations as to the Law Appointments.—A.D.

R I D E R A.

Branch Survey Office, Launceston, 29th September, 1862.

SIR,

As it is most desirable that all unnecessary labour in the Survey Office here should be reduced as much as possible, I beg leave to recommend that I be permitted to pay all moneys received by me into an account in the Bank here, instead of remitting day by day each person's payment in a separate letter, as by the mode hitherto adopted by Mr. Scott. I would, however, report daily all sums received, and for what received, and at the end of every week or month, as you may instruct, transmit a cheque for the whole or pay it in to your credit in Commercial Bank, sending you a deposit receipt.

I believe this plan would furnish a better check against errors, omissions, inaccuracies, or loss, and save a great deal of trouble.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

RONALD C. GUNN.

*The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer,
Hobart Town.*

MEMO. TO COLONIAL TREASURER.

ALL Government Officers required to give security shall have the option of giving personal security or the guarantee of an Assurance Society, such as the European.

The Government to have a form of Bond printed, with blanks for names, amount, office, &c. This would save much expense to the Clerks, &c.

All Government Officers receiving moneys should be required, wherever practicable, to keep a special Bank Account. The Bank Pass-book would then exhibit the account at any time. It could be sent for to Hobart Town, and the dates of deposits would show whether the sums were paid in regularly, or the account merely balanced temporarily.

RONALD C. GUNN.

April, 1862.