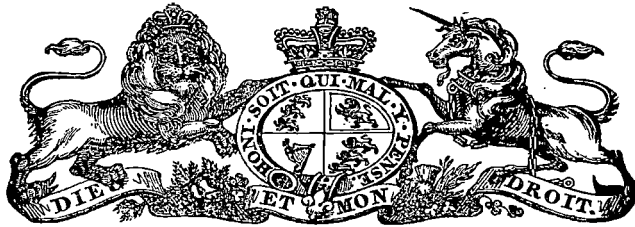


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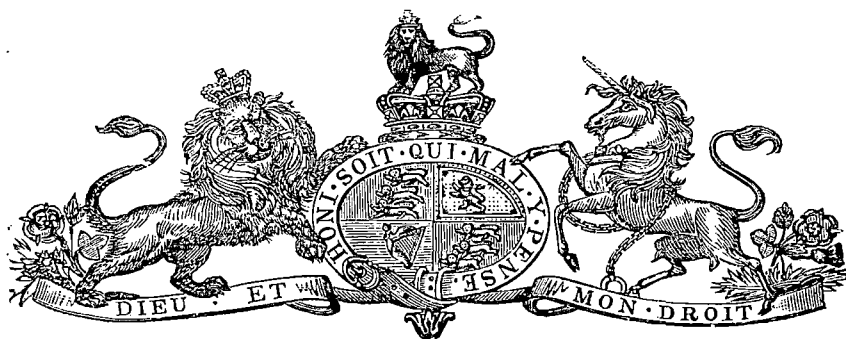
PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

R A T E X T E R M I N A T I O N :

REPORT FOR 1900.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

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RAT EXTERMINATION.

REPORT OF THE HOBART JOINT COMMITTEE.

To the Hon. the Chief Secretary ; to the Chairman and Members of the Local Board of Health of Hobart ; and to the Master Warden and Wardens of the Marine Board of Hobart.

GENTLEMEN,—

We, the Members of the Joint Committee, severally appointed by you to take the necessary measures to destroy, as far as possible, the rats in the City and Port of Hobart, have the honour to report to you as follows :—

On the outbreak of Bubonic Plague in Australia, and in view of the well-known fact of its propagation by rats, all local authorities were urgently charged, by a circular issued in March, to take all practical measures for the destruction of these vermin. A copy of this circular is attached to this Report. At Hobart the necessity of taking simultaneous action by all the authorities interested was pointed out by the Central Board of Health and by His Worship the Mayor ; and, on the invitation of the Government, a Conference was held on the 2nd May, at which the Government, the Local Board of Health of Hobart, and the Marine Board were represented, the Hon. the Premier presiding. The Conference decided that joint action should be taken, at joint expense, under the control of a committee of six, of whom two should be appointed by each authority represented at the Conference.

On the 3rd May, the Hon. the Chief Secretary announced that the Government had appointed Dr. Bright and Mr. Bennison, Members of the Central Board of Health, to be its representatives on the Joint Committee, and that the Hobart Local Board of Health had appointed Aldermen Henry and Snowden, and the Marine Board, Captain Evans, M.H.A., Master Warden, and Warden Watchorn, to be respectively their representatives. The Committee at once met, and appointed the Master Warden Chairman, Mr. Mault Secretary, and Mr. W. A. Brain Supervisor of the work.

It was also determined to offer a reward for the destruction of rats—which reward was fixed at 2*d.* a head for the rest of the month of May ; and the Supervisor was instructed to employ a staff of ten men for laying poison, setting traps, and taking general measures for rat destruction ; and the Government was asked, and acceded to the request, to make an advance of £100 to meet current expenses.

Work was immediately begun by the Committee's staff ; traps and poison were purchased, and the haunts of rats in the City and Wharves were systematically dealt with. At the same time, the co-operation of all the inhabitants was invited, by means of a circular, of which a copy is enclosed, and of which copies were left at all houses and business premises in the City—5804 in all. Advertisements were inserted in the papers of the rewards that would be paid on all rats brought to the place appointed for their reception—being the Corporation Yard in Lower Collins-street, kindly placed at our disposal by the City authorities ; and regulations were made for the safe conveyance of dead rats to this yard, and unless such regulations were fulfilled the reward was not paid.

The work was generally carried on as follows :—Poison—in the first instance, Phosphorus Paste, and afterwards other poisons, such as Toxa, a preparation of Strychnine—were laid along the wharves systematically night after night, beginning from one end and going on to the other. But, though all the poisoned baits were taken away by rats, not many died before they got back.

to their holes, or were carried away by the tide. Only few dead were found, though great slaughter must have occurred, as about 500 baits disappeared every night at first. Some of the dead were subsequently accidentally found in groups of twenty or more when repairs of paving, &c., were being done; but the greater part were probably washed down sewers into the harbour, or carried away from the wharves by the tide. Wherever laid, the poison was, as far as possible, kept out of the reach of domestic animals. The sewers were fumigated with sulphur, and the Hobart and other rivulets, and the Public Buildings, Slaughter Yard, and "tips" periodically dealt with. Traps were employed in considerable numbers. Those known as "break-backs" were not successful, nor yet various descriptions of tub or barrel traps; but the ordinary rabbit traps and wire traps gave the best results.

The disposal of the rats was thus effected:—Each workman had a pair of tongs and a bucket containing kerosene. The rats found were lifted by the tongs, and put into the bucket, which, when full, was taken to the receiving yard, counted by the receiver, and packed in old fruit cases well-tarred. Rats brought in by private persons were similarly counted and treated. Twice a day the filled cases were taken on a hand-cart to the Electric Tramway Works, and, by permission of the Company, thrown into the furnaces, in the fierce heat of which about three minutes sufficed to completely consume the boxes and their contents.

As may be supposed, we frequently received offers from persons, who, for a consideration, were ready to impart to us infallible means of destroying all the rats in the City. We listened to all that was advanced, and always offered every facility to these persons to prove the efficacy of their methods, but our offers were never accepted.

We endeavoured to secure the co-operation of the Local Boards of Health of all the Suburban Districts contiguous to Hobart. Our request was refused, chiefly on the ground that they were not troubled with rats; yet, we subsequently were asked by people living in one of these districts to allow our men to clear their premises of the vermin.

At first the destruction of rats was so great that they became scarce, so that we were able to reduce our staff of workmen, and had, at the same time, to raise the rate of reward to be paid to the private rat-catchers to 3*d.* a head. Finally, on the 31st October, the rest of the staff were paid off, and work was discontinued for the year.

In all, 13,993 rats were delivered at the receiving-yard, and taken thence and burnt as above described. But we have no doubt, from the number of poisoned baits that were carried off by rats, that the total number destroyed was over 20,000.

The accompanying accounts, taken from the monthly accounts issued to the Authorities represented on the Committee, show our total expenditure to have been £430 7*s.* 11*d.*, a sum which is about equal to a payment of 5*d.* a head for each rat destroyed—a cost which is less than the reward that has been paid elsewhere, without counting the other expenses connected with the campaign against these dangerous vermin.

We propose not to resign our trust, for the present, into your hands, but to remain ready to again begin operations should any need for them be developed. With this purpose in view, we have left our stock of traps, &c., under the care of our Supervisor.

We have the honour to be,
Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servants,

J. W. EVANS, *Chairman.*

R. S. BRIGHT.

WM. J. WATCHORN.

ROBT. SNOWDEN.

THOS. BENNISON.

ROBT. HENRY.

Hobart, 19th January, 1901.

A. MAULT, *Secretary.*

STATEMENT of Accounts Hobart Rat Extermination Committee.

Dr.		Cr.	
1900.	£ s. d.	1900.	£ s. d.
To Treasury	142 18 7	By Wages & Payments for Services	220 3 0
„ Local Board of Health.....	142 18 8	„ Payments for Rats.....	162 11 8
„ Hobart Marine Board.....	142 18 7	„ Poison, Traps, Implements, &c.	36 0 4
„ Unclaimed Rat Money	1 12 1	„ Printing, Advertising and Petty Expenses.....	11 12 11
	<u>£430 7 11</u>		<u>£430 7 11</u>

[CIRCULAR.]

BUBONIC PLAGUE.

As some cases of Bubonic Plague have occurred at Sydney, it is very desirable that all practical precautions should be taken to prevent its introduction into Tasmania.

The transmission of plague appears to be made from the excretions of the patient,—whether phlegm, or the solid or liquid discharges—and the purulent matter coming from the glandular swellings which characterises the disease; and it consequently can be conveyed by linen, clothing, dirty hands, and such like carriers of contagion. Rats are very susceptible to the disease, and are probably the most usual of all the means by which it is spread, either by directly contaminating human food, or through fleas, &c., which, having infested them, afterwards attack human beings.

Consequently the best means of preventing the spread of plague is the exercise of scrupulous cleanliness of person, and of dwelling and its surroundings, and the destruction of rats, and the protection of food from them.

The Central Board of Health, therefore, urgently charges all Local Boards of Health to see that the taking of these preventive means is inculcated throughout their districts; and to do what lies in their power by inspection of houses, outbuildings, yards, and streets, prevention of overcrowding in houses and lodgings, removal and destruction of all noisome solid and liquid matter, cleansing and disinfection of all sewers, drains, and gutters, to insure cleanliness; and the extirpation of rats by depriving them of their food and shelter, and by the more direct means of trapping and poison. Dead rats should be burnt without being handled.

The Central Board has taken steps to prevent the landing of rats from ships coming from infected ports. Local Boards of sea-port towns should urge upon the Marine Boards, Customs, owners, and other authorities in charge of wharves, stores, and other places liable to be infested with rats, to take active and simultaneous measures for their destruction, and for the cleaning out of their haunts. It is found that rats are often introduced with goods, such as crockery and hollow-ware packed in straw in open crates. Merchants and shopkeepers, should be cautioned to open such crates as soon as possible after arrival, and only in places where the destruction of any rats they may harbour could be insured.

Issued on the recommendation of the Central Board of Health.

Hobart, March, 1900.

GEO. COLLINS, *Chief Secretary.*

[TO ALL HOUSEHOLDERS AND OCCUPIERS OF PREMISES IN THE CITY OF HOBART.]

BUBONIC PLAGUE.

EXTERMINATION OF RATS.

In view of the presence of Plague at Sydney, and of the fact that there and everywhere else it was introduced and spread by rats, measures have been taken to prevent the bringing in of rats from that port to Tasmania, and especially to Hobart, where there is the most traffic with New South Wales.

But it is also necessary to destroy, as far as possible, all rats that are already here, so that, should any diseased rats be brought in, notwithstanding all the precautions taken, there should be none here to catch the disease and spread the infection.

To secure this, Government called a Conference of the Health and Port Authorities at Hobart. This Conference appointed a Committee to organise and superintend the work of rat destruction, and this Committee calls upon all the inhabitants of the City to co-operate in the work.

It is absolutely necessary that this destruction should go on at the same time all over the City; and, as rats are cunning enough to leave the places where they are hunted, trapped, or poisoned, and to seek shelter where they are left alone, those who will not work with their neighbours will most

probably find that their houses and premises will be overrun with the rats chased from their old runs, and they themselves exposed to the greatest risk of infection should the disease come into the City. No one has the right to expose himself and his neighbours to this risk, for such apathy may render useless many of the precautions taken against the Plague. The Committee therefore appeals to the public spirit of everybody to do his duty to his fellow citizens and neighbours, and to himself.

First—Take every practicable measure to kill all rats upon the premises or that come from elsewhere. Poison is the best means if care be taken to prevent all possibility of accident, especially to human life. Phosphorus Paste is said to be the best poison for the purpose, and Arsenic in the form called "Rough on Rats," is also recommended. Oil of Aniseed and Oil of Rhodium are said to be especially attractive to rats, and a little may be put with the poisoned food, or smeared on the traps. Set all kinds of traps; ratting dogs may also be safely used, as dogs very rarely, if ever, have been found suffering from Plague.

Dead rats must not be touched by hand—Pour boiling water over them, or kerosene, to kill the fleas on them; then pick them up with tongs and burn them, or put them in a closed receptacle and send them to the Corporation Yard, Lower Collins-street, where the bringer will be entitled to a reward.

Take every means to keep rats out of dwelling-houses by seeing that every opening through which they could come is closed, especially at night. Take the greatest care that rats cannot have access to any food intended for human consumption. See, in particular, that there is no direct way, by any drain, by which a rat could pass into the house.

Gather up with scrupulous care, all fragments of food, bones, vegetables, grain, and feed for horses, cows, pigs, or fowls, and either burn them behind the kitchen fire or put them in securely-closed dustbins. Rats are always searching for food, and will not stay where they can find none.

Issued by order of the Committee of the Conference.
Hobart, 7th May, 1900.