

(No. 67.)



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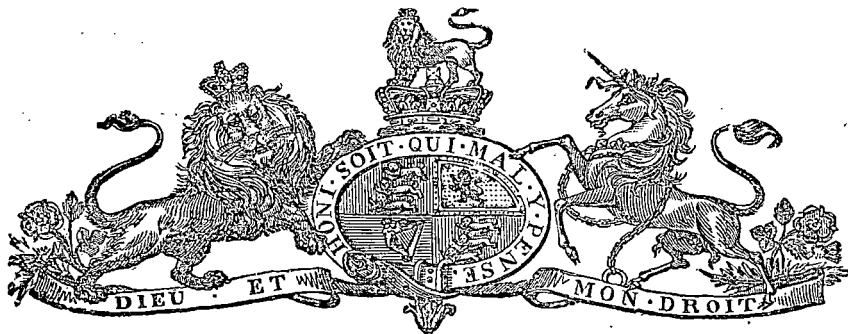
T A S M A N I A .

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

STATE AID COMMUTATION BILL.

PETITION OF REV. C. SIMSON AND REV. JOHN SERVICE.

Presented by Mr. Whyte, September 2 ; and ordered by the Council to be printed,
September 8, 1868.



Unto the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Members of the Standing Committee of the Presbytery of Tasmania.

HUMBLY SHOWETH :

THAT your Petitioners have been informed that an Amendment upon the State Aid Commutation Act now before your Honorable House will be proposed, to the effect that there should be deducted from the amount assigned to the Church of Scotland in the said Act a sum exceeding One thousand Pounds, which sum, along with one deducted from the amount assigned to the Church of England, it is intended to transfer to the Church of Rome, the Wesleyan Church, and the Free Church of Scotland.

That your Petitioners have reason to believe that this proposal, if not made, will be supported, by the Executive.

That while, as your Petitioners are aware, information has been conveyed by the Government as to this proposal to other Churches concerned in it, and negotiations carried on with them, no notice of it has been received either directly or indirectly from the Government by your Petitioners.

That your Petitioners cannot but regard this proposal as founded either upon error or deliberate injustice, and, in either case, as calculated to place the Church of Scotland in a worse position than any of the Churches named in the said Act.

That your Petitioners respectfully desire to draw the attention of your Honorable House to the following facts :—

1. The Church of Scotland in terms of the Church Act, and through the energy and liberality of its members, provided for its adherents in the early days of the Colony a larger Church accommodation than any other religious body.

2. At the present moment, consequently, the Church of Scotland has from eighteen to twenty Churches and Mission-houses (many of them valuable buildings) scattered throughout the Colony.

3. Instead of concentrating the efforts of its Ministers upon Hobart Town and Launceston, as the Church of Rome has largely done, the Church of Scotland has erected most of these Churches in outlying and thinly-peopled districts, such as those of the Tamar, Swanport, and Circular Head.

4. With the exception of one, the Ministers of the Church of Scotland named in the Schedule of the State Aid Distribution Act are aged men, several of them in failing health, and others contemplating an all but immediate retirement from the duties of their office.

5. If the proposal in question were adopted by your Honorable House and became law, the proceeds of the amount assigned to the Church of Scotland by the said Act would be less than £400 per annum.

6. The probability is that at a very early period, with the exception of one scheduled stipend (that of a Minister in Hobart Town, where State Aid is least required), this would be the whole sum at the disposal of the Presbytery of Tasmania for the purpose of maintaining—many of them in remote and thinly-peopled districts—nearly twenty Churches.

7. If these Churches were closed, they would not be available for the use of the Church to which the proposal complained of by your Petitioners would assign by far the larger part of the sum to be deducted from the amount due to the Church of Scotland. These Churches have been built for Presbyterian worship, and would not be suitable for the worship of the Church of Rome.

That your Petitioners, under these circumstances, consider the Church of Scotland entitled to the whole of the proportionate amount assigned to it in the Act now before your Honorable House.

That, rather than consent to so inequitable a proposal as that in question, your Petitioners would be prepared to support a measure for the total abolition of State Aid to religious bodies.

That by such a measure the Church of Scotland would be less aggrieved than by the proposal of which your Petitioners complain.

Your Petitioners, therefore, humbly entreat your Honorable House to reject any such Amendment upon the State Aid Commutation Act as that referred to in this Petition.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

C. SIMSON, *Convener*.
JOHN SERVICE.