

(No. 64.)



1871.

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T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

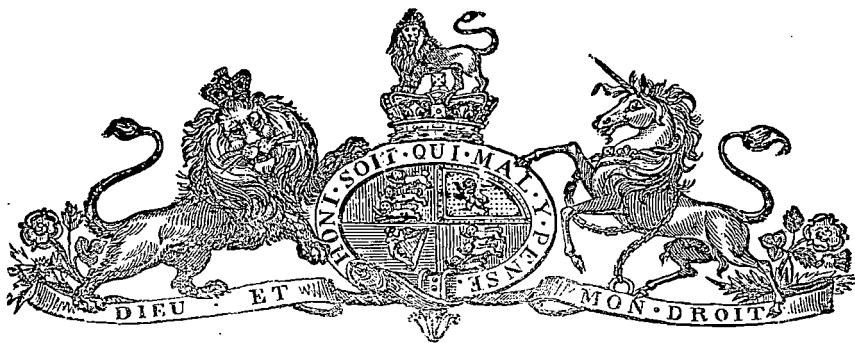
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E L E C T O R A L A C T.

PETITION AS TO DIVISION OF CITY OF HOBART TOWN.

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Presented by Mr. Fysh, December 8; and ordered by the Council be printed,  
December 14, 1871.



*To the Honorable the Legislative Council of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled.*

The humble Petition of the undersigned Freeholder and Householder Electors of the Electoral Districts of Central Hobart, North Hobart, East Hobart, South Hobart, and West Hobart.

SHOWETH:—

THAT by the original Electoral Act of Tasmania the City of Hobart Town was entitled to return five Members to the House of Assembly and three Members to the Legislative Council as its just proportion of the numbers constituting the Parliament of Tasmania.

That at the close of the last Session of the late Parliament a Bill was passed dividing the City of Hobart Town into five separate Electoral Districts for the Members of the House of Assembly, while it left the City as a whole for the return of the three Members of the Legislative Council.

That this Bill was passed when only fifteen Members out of the thirty composing the House of Assembly were present.

That by that alteration of the former Electoral Act the small freeholder living in his own house, and the householder Electors of the City, have been deprived of the right they previously possessed for voting for the whole of the City Members, being now confined to a vote for the Member for the Electoral District in which they reside, while the Elector owning property in the five Districts into which the City is divided has a vote in each District, thus giving them a plurality of votes,—a state of things creating a power in the interests of property unprecedented and unknown in any City or Town of the same population in any part of Her Majesty's Dominions where Parliamentary representation exists.

That this measure was not called for by the Electors of the City or of the Country, but, on the contrary, when some years ago a similar measure was openly introduced by the then Attorney-General, a Petition signed by upwards of fourteen hundred Electors was presented to both branches of the Legislature against the measure being passed, while with all the efforts put forth by the promoters of the Bill only one hundred and twenty-eight persons could be induced to sign a Petition in favour of it, and the Bill was consequently withdrawn.

That this Act positively destroys the balance of political power, which, in all Legislatures consisting of two Houses, is justly granted to the people who alone are represented in the lower branch of the Legislature, while property and its rights are amply protected in the upper branch of the Legislature, the Electorate of which are property owners alone, no householder merely having a vote therein. But by this Act the property owners of the City virtually return the Members to both Houses of the Legislature, the influence of numbers being destroyed by the plurality of votes created by the division of the City into Electoral Districts.

That the reason why no public demonstration was made against the Bill was that the clauses therein to which your Petitioners object were introduced as amendments on the last reading of the Bill in the Legislative Council, and were sent down the same evening to the House of Assembly and passed at once in the absence of half its Members, who had retired to their homes, never contemplating so radical a change in the principle of the Bill they had previously passed; and by this hasty legislation the Electors of the City were disfranchised, deprived of four-fifths of their political privileges, without an opportunity of availing themselves of their constitutional right of petitioning Parliament against the measure becoming law.

Your Petitioners therefore pray your Honorable House to repeal that portion of the Act which has thus deprived them of their political privileges while it has left the Electors of the Legislative Council the same privileges they enjoyed under the previous Electoral Act.

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

*[Here follow 1067 Signatures.]*

JAMES BARNARD,  
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.