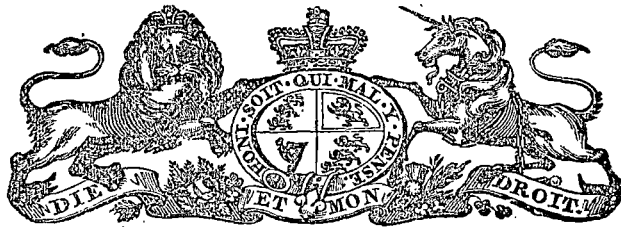


(No. 49.)



1867.

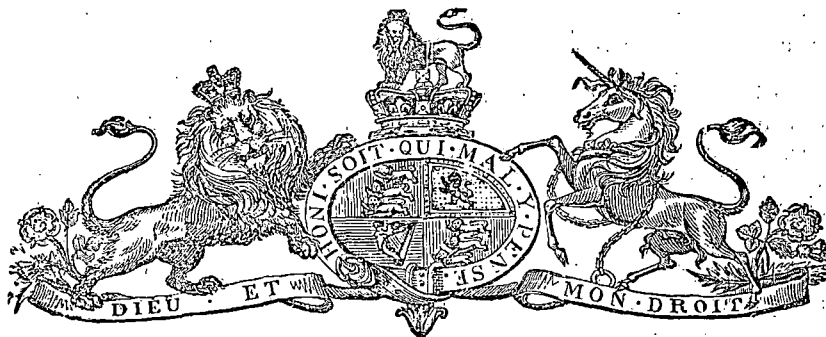
T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

QUALIFICATION OF ELECTORS.

PETITION FOR REDUCTION, FROM DISTRICTS HOBART AND
HOBART TOWN.

Presented by Mr. Fysh, September 24; and ordered by the Council to be
printed, September 26, 1867.



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

The humble Petition of the undersigned Citizens and Electors of the Electoral Districts of Hobart and Hobart Town.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH :

THAT the gradual depreciation of the value of property which has unfortunately characterised the last ten years of the history of this Colony, the period during which Tasmania has enjoyed the advantage of Representative Institutions and Responsible Government, has had the practical effect of raising the property and occupancy qualification of Electors to a higher standard than that originally fixed by the Constitutional Act in 1854.

That the operation of the existing Electoral Acts which constitute the Valuation Rolls and Assessment Lists of Police Districts and Municipalities the basis of the Electoral Rolls for the Districts returning Members to Parliament has tended of late years to reduce the number of the Electoral Body, and to disfranchise a considerable number of persons who were originally qualified as Electors under the provisions of the Constitutional Act.

That the Constitutional Act conferred the right to vote in the election of Members of the Legislative Council upon all freehold owners of property of the clear annual value of £50; and in the election of Members of the House of Assembly upon all freehold owners of property of the clear value of £100, and upon all householders "occupying any house, warehouse, counting-house, office, shop, or other building of the clear annual value of £10."

That this definition of the qualification of Electors of the House of Assembly practically established *household suffrage*, inasmuch as at the date of the passing of the Constitutional Act there was scarcely a tenement in the Colony occupied by any householder at a lower annual rent than £10.

That the Electoral Act, No. 1, provided a system of registration of Electors and revision of the Electoral Rolls by Revising Barristers, under which it was competent to persons claiming the Franchise to substantiate the value of freehold or other qualifying premises by independent testimony adduced in open Court, to be judged of by the Revising Barrister, without reference to any official valuation or Municipal assessment.

That the Electoral Acts in force have practically deprived persons claiming the Franchise of this advantage, inasmuch as the Valuation Rolls and Assessment Lists are constituted by law the basis of the Electoral Rolls; and the Revision Courts, which finally decide upon all appeals against the objections of the Returning Officer, are composed for the most part of the same Magistrates who have previously settled the Valuation Rolls and Assessment Lists on which the Returning Officers' objections are founded.

That the annual settlement of Valuation Rolls and Assessment Lists by Magistrates and Municipal Councils—entrusted to them solely for the purposes of local taxation—has practically placed the Electoral Franchise at the arbitrary disposal of these authorities.

That owing to these causes—the depreciation in the value of property, and the operation or abuse of the existing Electoral law—many freeholders and householders possessed of the same property and occupying the same premises as in 1854, and then qualified to vote in the election of Members of the Council and House of Assembly respectively, are now disfranchised and deprived of those political privileges which they acquired, and for a time actually enjoyed, under the Constitutional Act.

That the effect of this state of things is to deprive the Class of £50 freeholders of the Constitutional Act of their legitimate share in the choice of Parliamentary representatives, and to concentrate political influence in the hands of the smaller, but already sufficiently powerful, class of large owners of real property, whose qualifications as freeholders necessarily stand unaffected by the accidental decrease in the value of property or the arbitrary reduction of assessments.

That the operation of the same causes, especially in Hobart Town, has considerably diminished the class of persons entitled under the Constitutional Act to vote in the election of Members of the House of Assembly as £100 freeholders and £10 householders, inasmuch as the property and premises which constituted freehold and household qualifications in 1854 are now assessed for purposes of local taxation below the value which confers the franchise under the provisions of the Constitutional Act.

That your Petitioners desire to see the Parliamentary Franchise established upon the liberal basis provided by the Constitutional Act in 1854, and the registration of Parliamentary Electors placed beyond the control of the local Magistracy and Municipal Councils.

That your Petitioners believe that, in order to restore the Franchise to the standard fixed by the Legislature in 1854, it is now necessary and just, in view of the depreciation which has taken place in the value of property since that date, to re-adjust the qualifications of Parliamentary Electors as follows:—For the Legislative Council—freehold of £30 clear annual value; for the House of Assembly—freehold of £75 clear value; occupancy of £6 annual value; salary of £75 a year; leasehold estate of £6 annual value; and, in addition to the other personal qualifications prescribed by the Constitutional Act, the possession of the Degree of Associate of Arts conferred by the Tasmanian Council of Education.

That your Petitioners further believe that it is necessary and desirable, in order to secure the people in the possession of the electoral privileges and political rights contemplated by the Constitutional Act, that the final revision of the Electoral Rolls should be entrusted to Revising Barristers appointed, as in England, by their Honors the Judges, and that such officers should be required by law to decide all questions of the value of qualifying property or premises irrespectively of any valuation or assessment of property for the purposes of local taxation.

Your Petitioners therefore pray your Honorable House to take the premises into consideration, and to pass such measures as to your wisdom shall seem meet, (1.) To re-establish the Parliamentary Franchise upon the basis contemplated by the Constitutional Act; and (2.) To secure the people of Tasmania in the uninterrupted possession and peaceable enjoyment of their electoral privileges and political rights.

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

[Here follow 688 Signatures.]