

(No. 60.)



1870.

T A S M A N I A .

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

PACKAGE DUTY ON STATIONERY.

PETITION.

Presented by Mr. Grubb, September 20; and ordered by the Council to be printed,
September 21, 1870.



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

The humble Petition of the undersigned Stationers, Newspaper Proprietors, Printers, Bookbinders,
&c.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH :

THAT your Petitioners have learned with surprise and alarm that it is proposed to impose a Package Duty of Four Shillings per cubic foot on Stationery, Writing Papers, and Envelopes; Three Shillings per foot on Printing Papers; and Two Shillings per foot on Cardboard and Wrapping Papers.

That, amidst frequent alterations of the Tariff, these articles have heretofore been admitted duty free with the entire approval of the people; thereby indicating a settled conviction that it is desirable and proper to afford every facility for the diffusion of knowledge and the blessings of social intercourse throughout the community.

That the proposed tax, your Petitioners beg permission to say, is altogether opposed to what may thus be regarded as the settled policy of the country in that respect, and is moreover totally inconsistent with the views recently propounded to Parliament. When, in his Budget speech, the Honorable Colonial Treasurer intimated his intention to reduce the postage on ship and inland letters one-half, he quoted from a similar address of the Treasurer of Victoria to show that the reduction of postage rates there had been followed by a yearly increasing number of letters. The honorable gentleman went on to say, that "all experience went to prove that cheap postage is what is wanted," that "every convenience should be afforded to the public" through the Post Office, and that "with reduced rates of postage the people will make an increased use of it." But in the face of this reduction—so desirable on social grounds, so justifiable even financially—it is proposed to levy a duty of Four Shillings per foot on Writing Paper and Envelopes, the materials without which the Post Office would be an unmeaning and useless department.

That the same objections apply in reference to the proposed duty on Printing Paper. On the occasion referred to the Honorable Colonial Treasurer remarked that it was not intended to impose a Stamp Tax on newspapers, that, as they are regarded as "general instructors," the Government looked upon the concession in their favour "as an educational vote," and that "it was intended to make up the deficiency from other sources." That, notwithstanding this assurance, it is proposed to levy an exorbitant and oppressive duty on Printing Paper, which, in so far as it affects newspapers, will operate in precisely the same injurious way as a postage rate; namely, tend to diminish the circulation of the "general instructor," whilst as regards the ordinary printing and bookbinding trades the effect of the tax would be most disastrous. Most, if not all, of the smaller establishments where these trades are carried on would be inevitably ruined; and thus some of our most useful local industries, the small number of which is so generally deplored, would be still further diminished.

That whilst Tasmanian newspapers would thus be harassed by the contemplated burden, all sea-borne newspapers arriving in the Colony would be distributed free; and, further, as books and printed papers are exempt from duty, it is reasonable to suppose that the printed bags, bill-heads, and other work required by Tasmanian tradesmen will be procured from the adjacent Colonies, to the further injury of local residents.

That, for these and other reasons which your Petitioners do not feel it necessary to enlarge upon here, your Petitioners humbly pray that your Honorable Council will be pleased to withhold its assent from the proposed Duties on the articles alluded to.

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

[*Here follow 9 Signatures.*]

JAMES BARNARD,
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.