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1880.

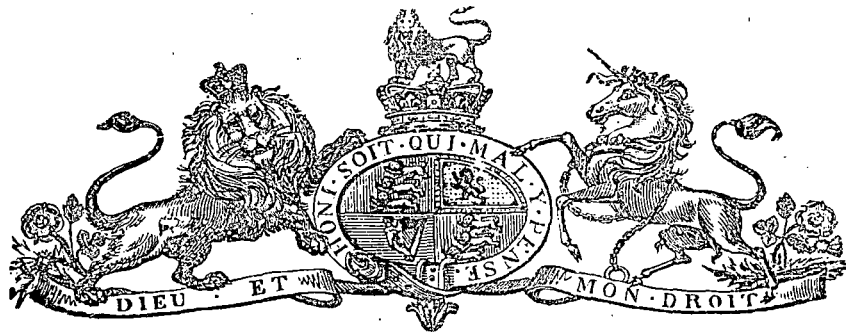
TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

THE SCAB ACT:

REPORT FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE, WITH EVIDENCE.

Brought up by Mr. Scott; and ordered by the House to be printed, September 23,
1880.



SELECT COMMITTEE appointed on the 16th September, 1880, to enquire into the working of the Scab Act Department, and keeping Accounts, with power to send for persons and papers.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

MR. HODGSON.
MR. PILLINGER.
MR. KEACH.
MR. GUNN.

MR. LAMB.
MR. COX.
MR. SCOTT.

DAYS OF MEETING.

Friday, 17 September.
Wednesday, 22 September.
Thursday, 23 September.

WITNESSES EXAMINED.

The Honorable James Whyte, Chief Inspector.
Wm. Lovett, Esq., Auditor.

EXPENSES OF WITNESSES.

None.

R E P O R T.

Your Committee find as follows:—

According to the Report of the Chief Inspector of Sheep there has been no case of disease for the last two years; and therefore he can dispense with some of the Inspectors, and has done so.

It appears that the Scab Act has been in force since October 1869, and fees have been paid on Sheep for the past ten years; viz, for 5 years at a farthing per head, and 5 years at a halfpenny. The contribution due in 1881 will be the eleventh year, when paid.

The Act 41 Victoria, No. 8, passed 11 December, 1877, increased the fee from a farthing to a halfpenny per head for 1878 and no longer.

As this was fully understood to be final, in view of the reported eradication of the disease, which would by then have been effected, we consider the Staff of Inspectors should have been decreased after 1879; as their duties became then less onerous, and the funds at the disposal would then have been sufficient without an increase of contribution.

It appears that prior to 1873 the Salaries paid were as follows:—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Chief Inspector, Salary	300	0	0				
Forage and Travelling Expenses ...	200	0	0				
	500				500	0	0
Inspectors, Salary	150	0	0				
Allowances	100	0	0				
	250				250	0	0

In consequence of the Colony being now clean, we approve of Mr. Whyte's suggestion that a staff of three Inspectors under the Chief Inspector be retained after 1880, as a "necessary economy, and not "a cheese-paring policy."

	£	s.	d.
Chief Inspector, Salary and Allowances	500	0	0
Clerk to ditto	150	0	0
Three Inspectors, Salary and Allowances—each £350	1050	0	0
Stationery, Office, and Miscellaneous	140	0	0
	£1840		
	0 0		

We find that the Chief Inspector only receives the annual contributions; that all fines, &c. do not pass through his books; and that no complete debtor and creditor accounts of this Department are kept in his office. This we consider should be remedied, as the Colonial Auditor has expressed his decided opinion that such books should have been kept to show the state of the receipts and expenditure in detail, when an account of such could be furnished at any time within 24 hours.

Your Committee have to draw attention to the fact that owing to many small fees being paid in stamps the receiver has to sell them at a discount of 5 per cent., instead of the Government receiving them at their full value, by which we consider the fund is thus unjustly lessened thereby.

Your Committee also find that in calculating the one-fourth to be added for non-payment of contributions in time, it has not in all cases been exacted, when the contribution appears by the Cash Book to have been paid.

Your Committee would recommend that three Inspectors under the Chief Inspector should be sufficient to carry out the Act properly after the year 1880.

The yearly fees from the sheep at a farthing a head amount to about £1900; this, by limiting the staff as proposed, will leave a small surplus for the year 1881.

In view of the estimated deficiency of £750 at the close of 1880, your Committee recommend that a contribution of three-eighths of a penny per head be levied for 1881.

JAMES SCOTT, *Chairman.*

Committee Room, 23rd September, 1880.

EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER, 1880.

The Honorable JAMES WHYTE, M.E. C., called in and examined.

IN reply to questions by the Chairman, states :—

I am Chief Inspector of Sheep.

Part of my duty is to receive contributions to the Scab Act Fund.

I do not receive all the contributions.

The penalties go to the Colonial Treasury.

I have a check upon the fines imposed, by noting all fines imposed; and every six months I send a memo. of them to the Auditor.

If the accounts from the Treasury do not show all the payments, the Auditor at once calls for returns.

No person but myself can make any payments under the Act.

All salaries are paid to me from the Treasury in one sum founded upon monthly abstracts, which are signed and receipted by Inspectors, and sent to the Auditor after signature and payment.

I am not aware of any complaint of non-payment of salaries.

The only book I keep for payment of salaries is my bank book, supported by my cheque book. I have never kept any other book.

I sign the abstracts for salaries, and draw the amount in a lump from the Treasury, and as I said distribute it to the several Inspectors. It is not a private book. It is No. 1 account, Chief Inspector, at the bank.

You call my attention to certain payments to Inspectors, £35 and £25. I recommended the payment of these sums for somewhat special extra services, and they were approved by the Governor in Council.

I consider their remuneration insufficient.

All vouchers for these payments are in the Audit Office.

Inspectors are not allowed to charge extra fees for examining cattle.

It would be better, and much more simple, if all sums received and expended from the Scab Act Fund passed through my books.

By Mr. Pillingier.—Mr. Manley, the late Auditor, gave me verbal instructions as to the best mode of keeping the accounts.

If you want an account of the salaries paid to Inspectors you will have to refer to my bank books.

All amounts received by me for contributions are paid into the Treasury monthly before a certain day in the month. If not paid before that date salaries are stopped.

I send a list of defaulters to the Inspectors, who look them up.

I have a printed list of the contributors throughout the colony, based upon the annual Stock and Crop Returns, but there are many who do not pay up regularly. A good many for 1880 have not yet paid up; principally small flocks.

Sheep landed at the two ports do not leave the immediate vicinity of the towns. If they go into the country they are dipped under supervision of inspectors.

Sheep and cattle are principally landed at Hobart Town and Launceston.

Many are also landed at Circular Head, Emu Bay, Cam, and Mersey; at the last considerable numbers. If these are to go into the interior they are inspected and dipped. Notice being given to the Inspector, he sees to this.

Is the staff not too large? My opinions on this subject are fully embodied in my report. I think the full staff should have been kept up till the end of the present year. I am sure we cannot prudently do without four inspectors at least.

I have been asked to allow sheep to land at Spring Bay, but I have no inspector who could be employed there. A scabby sheep might at any time be landed at Spring Bay from Victoria. Sheep from Europe or America might be brought from Victorian waters.

If the country is found to be clean at the close of the year three inspectors might possibly be enough, provision being made for inspection whilst officers are sick or otherwise necessarily absent, but I am of opinion that four should be maintained during 1881. The saving of one Inspector's salary is a small consideration. I think that all public sales should be inspected; though there has been no prosecution for infected sheep for nearly two years, yet there were many before that time.

I am not even sure that four inspectors will be enough.

The quarantine yards are kept up by funds entirely apart from the sheep contribution. I receive no allowance as Cattle Inspector, and there are no fees paid to Inspector by importers of cattle. It was once proposed to charge expenses to fund but I strongly objected.

The Islands in the Straits have been inspected. Mr. Maclaine used to get £50 a year for this, but it has ceased.

I sent Inspector Allison to King's Island, and he visited many of the other Islands. He got no additional remuneration for this duty. Mr. Inspector Fletcher visited all the Islands some years ago.

I produce my books for inspection by members of the Committee, and some monthly returns of inspectors.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1880.

WM. LOVETT, *Esq.*, Colonial Auditor, called in and examined.

By the Chairman.—I think it better that all receipts and disbursements should go through the Chief Inspector of Sheep.

I have found difficulty as to the collections of fines imposed, as there is no one to look after them.

No one but the Chief Inspector can make payments under the Act. None are made without his certificate.

I know from the Inspectors' Reports when fines have been inflicted. These reports are furnished every three months, I think. I don't believe that six months are allowed to elapse, as stated by Mr. Whyte, without the returns being sent in.

It is strictly in accordance with the Audit Regulations for the Chief Inspector to draw the salaries of his department and to pay them. The voucher is the receipt of the officer on the salary abstract. The salaries are fixed by Parliament.

My office merely checks the payments made by the Treasury or others, so as to be in accordance with the Votes of Parliament and authorities. I look upon the abstract as an abstract for a particular month.

I am of opinion that accounts debtor and creditor should be kept. The abstracts are not sufficient accounts.

I think the Chief Inspector ought to keep an account of all his receipts and disbursements, and of his demands on the Treasury.

The Treasurer would not pass the account unless it is met by a Vote of Parliament.

When the Chief Inspector draws a lump sum for salaries and allowances he sends an abstract of the items due to each person, and completes the abstract by attaching the receipt of each person afterwards, and then forwards the abstract to the Auditor.

In 1875 the advance of £150 was for miscellaneous expenses. Advances are made on the understanding that vouchers for the expenditure are furnished to the Treasury.

I consider the vouchers with the Ministerial approval to be an acquittal of the advance if in accordance with previous authorities.

By Mr. Pillinger.—Mr. Whyte cannot spend any money unless it is previously authorised. When an amount is authorised by the Governor in Council the Minister can approve of the expense.

I think that all sums should pass through Mr. Whyte's books. The Bank Book should not be the only book kept by Mr. Whyte.

By Mr. Cox.—I cannot tell what money is to be paid in till the Returns are furnished. The Inspector has to furnish attested Returns of all moneys collected; or, in the case of none being collected, he sends in an attested Return "Nil."

A proper debtor and creditor account should be made out; not only for the future but for the past. If the expenditure has been proper there can be no difficulty in the matter beyond the labour entailed in making it out.

It is certainly always usual in dealing with moneys of other persons to supply a debtor and creditor account, and I know of no department that could not do it.

I have long urged upon the Government to enable me to personally inspect accounts of the several departments; and it is only this year that, by the appointment of a competent accountant, proper assistance has been granted to me. This will prevent a good many irregularities in departments which collect moneys.

A detailed account of all receipts and payments would be certainly attended with good effect.

The Audit Office simply depends on the returns of the Inspector of Sheep. We have no other means of knowing how many sheep there are under assessment than that compiled by the Inspector, which should be a printed document to enable me thoroughly to check it.

My Department checks all the calculations carefully, and the dates.

I recommend that he should keep an account current of all receipts and expenses under the Scab Act Department.

If such a book had been kept the Returns called for by Parliament recently could have been given in twenty-four hours.

On looking through the Cash Book, now before me, for 1879, I perceive that in the month of May the amount of receipts on 13,389 sheep was £14 17s. 6d.

If the one-fourth were added in every case, the amount would have been £17 8s. 7d.

There is no check on the contributions. The Statistician's Return would, to a certain extent, be a check on the contributions.