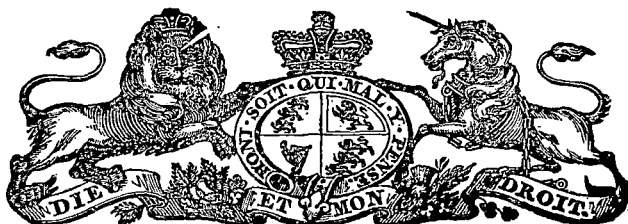


(No. 49.)



1871.

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T A S M A N I A.

H O U S E O F A S S E M B L Y.

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F L U K E.

M R . R . C R A W F O R D ' S R E P O R T.

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Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands and Works, and ordered by the House to be printed, November 15, 1871.



Hobart Town, 14th March, 1871.

SIR,

THE inspection and valuation of the Crown Lands having been so far completed as to embrace the chief pastoral districts of the Colony, I deem it desirable to bring under your notice the very large proportion of the crown estate which is thrown out of occupation in consequence of the Fluke disease from the land being waterlogged. In order to understand the question with some degree of accuracy, I have carefully gone over the detailed returns of each lot of land in nine Survey Districts, and attach herewith a summary showing the area in each district thus situated. The aggregate gives an area of 434,916 acres, of which there is leased, but only partially occupied, 115,462 acres, (mostly at the minimum rental of Ten Shillings per 100 acres).

The entire of this large area has been formerly occupied by valuable flocks and herds; the estimated carrying capacity being 130,300 sheep, and 8285 cattle: annual rental £6586.

Deducting, however, the proportion still leased (115,462 acres), and putting the maximum rental of 20s. per 100 acres, £1154 10s., there remains £5432 10s. as the loss which the crown revenue suffers yearly. Further, taking a lower estimate, as under the valuation of pastoral lands according to "The Waste Lands Act, 1870," 130,300 sheep and 8258 cattle, at the average of 6d. per head for sheep and 3s. for cattle, would give £4500 as the annual loss: in either case the estimated loss is a low one. The crown not only loses a direct revenue yearly, but the material wealth of the community suffers from its flocks and herds being thus lowered. The question thus considered assumes proportions which, I respectfully submit, necessitates grave attention as to the means which might be adopted by the Government to induce parties again to occupy this large extent of the crown estate.

In my Report (2nd January, 1869,) on the crown lands in the Counties of Cumberland and Lincoln, I note:—"These lands form a fine pastoral country, which would be greatly enhanced in value by a proper system of drainage being set about. The only means by which the Fluke disease can be overcome, and the lands under review improved, is by effectual drainage, ringing the trees where the land is good, and burning off two years after being rung. I estimate the cost of drainage at from 3s. to 5s. per acre, and for ringing and burning off from 1s. to 2s., but in most cases 5s. per acre would cover the cost of draining and ringing. I fear that at the present juncture no scheme, however liberal as to tenure of lease, or with compensation added if the land should be required for sale, will induce the crown tenants to engage in carrying out a proper scheme of drainage. As a class they have not the means to do so."

On the 27th July, 1869, the Royal Commission on Fluke submitted their Report to His Excellency the Governor. They circulated a series of questions (14) to nearly 400 persons, and received answers from 159 practical and competent judges which the Commissioners exhaustively analyze, as also giving the natural history of the *Trematoda*, to which order the Fluke belongs, a critical and scientific research. The pith of the Report is,—“We unanimously adopt the axiom which has been established by the experience of all other countries which have suffered from the ravages of the Fluke; viz., that the drying up of low-lying lands by a system of thorough drainage is the only plan which can be permanently successful;” and close their admirable Report thus,—“We venture to hope that energetic action will generally be taken in a matter which has so important a connection with one of the chief sources of our national wealth and prosperity.” Here the only permanent remedy is clearly stated, but no “energetic action” has been taken to abate the evil, nor can private individuals, in the present state of the pastoral and agricultural interests, enter upon a system of drainage which would materially assist to re-occupy the crown estate. In an early Report I gave expression of approval as to the crown undertaking such works thus:—"It is not desirable, as a rule, that the crown should undertake such works; yet, as the proprietor of so fine an estate, under exceptional circumstances (inability of crown lessees or landholders from want of means), it might be well worth taking into consideration the propriety of at least initiating a good system of drainage by taking in hand a section of this country.” (New Country and Lakes.)

I have inspected many thousands of acres since, and the evil has come so frequently before me, and has assumed such proportions, as to warrant me in submitting to your consideration the propriety of the government assisting the lessees and proprietors of lands so situated. My duties have brought me in contact with a great number of flockmasters, and the unanimous approval of this important section of the community would be given to any government providing relief, by loan, at a moderate rate of interest, that would enable them to reclaim these lands.

No practical person can travel through the pastoral and agricultural lands of the Colony without being impressed by the low state of agriculture generally, and want of improvement on the pastoral lands: combined, lies the true cause of the depressed state in which these important industries are at the present time; and the question of drainage, of agricultural as also pastoral lands, is at the root of the evil. The more expensive, but even more important, drainage of agricultural lands does not come within the scope of this Memorandum; yet I may remark that I have noted many thousands of acres of the richest agricultural lands in the Colony, chiefly held by private parties, which would be immensely increased in productiveness by a sound system of underground drainage, not only in cereal crops but in grazing capabilities.

Effectual drainage is the first essential improvement to a profitable system of cultivation; all other aids to productiveness (such as irrigation, manures, &c.) will fail to accomplish the desired effect fully unless the land is drained,—indeed irrigation without it is a positive evil,—and many cases could be named in this Colony where serious evils have arisen, and properties rendered comparatively valueless, by laying water on without attending to the means of exit. The Commission on Fluke report—“The introduction of a rude and imperfect (*i.e.*, without drainage) system of irrigation caused the establishment of permanent nurseries for the propagation of the disease (fluke), which by travelling and interchange of stock was slowly but surely disseminated through a large extent of the pastoral districts.”

My duty is, however, more especially with the pastoral lands of the crown estate, which can be effectually drained for pastoral purposes at a moderate cost. The attached return of lands abandoned or only partially occupied shows an *annual loss* to the revenue of £4500 at a low calculation. If assistance could be given to the lessees of this land to the extent of one-half (*i.e.*, if one-half went to pay interest on loan for draining purposes), it would enable a sum to be raised which, devoted to the improvement of the crown estate, would in a few years enhance its value fourfold, and yearly increase the wealth of the Colony. It may be noted also that the purely pastoral lands of the Colony—New Country and Lake District specially so—do not require at the present time grants in aid for roads; at all events construction and maintenance of roads outside the ordinary rate levied on property is not essential to their development; flocks and herds can travel without much aid in that way, and would be sent to these lands, as formerly, *if made sound*: and I think it would be a more legitimate application of the land (specially that portion awarded to the Board of Works) “arising from purchase, rent or licence fees payable in respect of waste lands of the crown” sold or leased in the *pastoral* districts, if applied to drainage. As an example, I take from Treasury Return, August, 1869, the amounts appropriated from this fund to four districts which are purely pastoral, those which specially require drainage rather than a further extension of roads to induce occupation and sale of crown lands; viz., Bothwell, Hamilton, Lake District, and Oatlands: the gross return from sale and lease is £15,179 6s. 8d., and the *year's* apportionment amounts to £2232, with an unexpended balance of £4525 18s. 8d. (I leave out of calculation the amount appropriated from the same fund as grant in aid meeting the assessment levied for road purposes). If the *year's* apportionment be reduced to £1800 (which is a low calculation from sale and lease of pastoral lands, as it must be remembered that it is from these four districts the chief rental is derived), it would give a yearly fund to pay interest on loan. Shortly, I would recommend that the proportion of the one-fourth of the Land Fund derived from the sale and lease of purely *pastoral* lands, and specially in the districts named, now appropriated to the Board of Works, should be devoted to the improvement of the *pastoral* crown estate by drainage and ringing of trees, and I am confident that in the course of three years the fund from such sources would be very considerably augmented.

I trust it may not be out of place here to call attention to the initiation of the new system of leasing the pastoral crown lands as provided by “The Waste Lands Act, 1870.” The late period of the year at which it became operative prevented the lands vacant being offered at auction at a time of the year when likely to be taken up. The greater and most valuable portion of the crown estate is situated in the New Country and Lake Districts, chiefly made use of for the summer months; viz., from November to May inclusive, and leases of these lands to be successfully passed off should be offered not later than October. The leases offered in December last did not command competition from this cause,—in fact they could not be made use of for 12 months. I would most respectfully submit the desirability of taking measures for the coming season, and as considerable areas of land are occupied, but no rent accruing (from lots being leased in such a form as to render the adjoining useless to any but the present holders, which the new system of leasing was designed to obviate), the present crown lessees should have six months notice of the land being required for sale; at the expiration of that time the land being offered for sale as now grouped, and no sale taking place, they would at once be available for lease under the new regulations. Until this is done no sensible increase of the

revenue can take place. The objection that compensation would have to be paid is, in my opinion, untenable; very few of the outgoing tenants have any claim, and those who have could only claim a very small amount for what they leave behind.

"The Waste Lands Act, 1870," is a great improvement on the past; more liberal in its provisions to the purchaser and lessee, as also more just to the crown, especially as to leases of land from which so large a portion of the Land Fund should arise, combined with a measure which would give aid to the purchaser and lessee to improve these waste lands (specially by drainage and ringing of trees), the crown revenue would be shortly very largely increased and the national wealth sensibly augmented.

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

ROBERT CRAWFORD.

*The Honorable the Minister of Lands and Works,  
Hobart Town.*

*RETURN of Pastoral Crown Lands which have been abandoned in consequence of the Fluke Disease, and also of Lands leased but only partially occupied from the same cause.*

COUNTY.	CLASS AND AREA.			CARRYING CAPACITY.		ANNUAL VALUE.
	<i>First.</i>	<i>Second.</i>	<i>Third.</i>	<i>Sheep.</i>	<i>Cattle.</i>	
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.			£ s. d.
Cumberland .....	29,912	66,803	14,709	48,650	3510	2181 15 0
Lincoln .....	596	31,481	5385	11,750	450	564 15 0
Westmoreland.....	18,907	21,555	..	18,250	900	1048 0 0
Somerset .....	2250	46,909	13,482	17,800	1250	1135 10 0
Cornwall .....	..	11,465	60,984	10,550	1525	792 0 0
Pembroke .....	..	..	1500	200	..	8 0 0
Glamorgan .....	..	4811	1309	1800	..	72 0 0
Dorset .....	..	3358	101,830	21,300	650	784 0 0
	53,665	182,052	199,199	130,300	8285	6586 0 0
Giving a Total Acreage of 434,916 Acres, of which there is leased, but only partially occupied,—						
Cumberland .....	15,940	26,553	1490	13,350	1260	
Lincoln .....	596	14,000	..	3300	350	
Somerset .....	2250	34,499	..	12,100	700	
Cornwall and Dorset .....	..	3358	16,776	3900	300	
Giving a Total of 115,462 Acres which, at the full rental of 20s. per 100 Acres, would give .....						1154 10 0
Leaving a loss on the annual value of .....						£5432 10 0

Again, taking the estimated carrying capacity at 130,300 Sheep and 8285 Cattle, at a minimum assessment of 6d. per head for Sheep and 3s. for Cattle, the annual return should be .....

£4500 0 0

ROBERT CRAWFORD.