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1872.

SESSION II.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

SUB-INSPECTORS OF SHEEP.

**LETTER FROM CHIEF INSPECTOR AS TO SALARIES AND
ALLOWANCES.**

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Wilson, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
October 29, 1872.



Inspector of Sheep Office, Hobart Town, 14th June, 1872.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to bring under your notice the position of Sub-Inspectors under the Scab Act with respect to their salaries and allowances.

When these appointments were made, you may remember that I considered the emoluments then fixed were on a scale much too low to be a sufficient remuneration for the important, arduous, and delicate duties Inspectors would have to perform.

Two years experience has tended to confirm me in that opinion: and, moreover, I am in a position to state that thoughtful and intelligent settlers have expressed to me their belief that Inspectors are not sufficiently paid; that they would be glad to see Inspectors' salaries and allowances considerably increased; and to accomplish this they would have no objection to see the present contribution on sheep increased, or some other mode of raising the fund devised which would accomplish the same object. I am aware that the salaries were fixed as high as the fund would admit of; and I believe that the members of the Government thought them too low; but the limited character of the fund, and the then unknown nature and probable results of their work, excepting through the representations of myself and some few others, made it impossible to fix the salaries on a more liberal scale.

Now that the nature, extent, and importance of Inspectors' duties are better known and understood by yourself, your colleagues in the Government, and by those most deeply interested in the working of the Scab Act, viz., the sheepowners, I think it my duty to represent to the Government in the strongest terms how inadequate are the present salaries and allowances of Inspectors; and to point out, at the same time, how the Scab Act Fund may be so raised as to admit of their being increased to a fair and reasonable amount.

In my Report to you of the 1st November, 1871, I stated, that "if the fund was derived from a small impost on wool instead of so much per sheep,—say 9d. or 1s. per one hundred pounds weight of wool,—it would be a much simpler mode of raising the amount, and I have no hesitation in saying that in my belief it would be fairer than the present system." I further stated in the same Report, that "the objection which might be alleged against such a proposition that it would be introducing a bad principle, viz., a tax upon exports, would not hold, as this would be a special impost for a special purpose solely connected with, and for the advantage of, the wool-producing interests. It would be so small that it would never be felt, and would save all the trouble and annoyance of 1700 or 1800 persons sending small sums through the Post Office."

Further consideration of the question, and two years' experience of the working of the present system of raising the Fund by a contribution on Sheep, have confirmed me in the opinions expressed in the foregoing extracts from my Report of November last; and I may add that, during my late tour through some of the principal Sheep Districts, I found that several intelligent Sheepowners with whom I conversed agreed with me in opinion.

Under the present system, with all the vigilance and care which I can with the assistance of the Sub-Inspectors bring to bear upon the Annual Returns, a very considerable number of Sheep drop out of them in various ways; not that the number unaccounted for would in any material way affect the amount of the Scab Act Fund. I only mention it as an argument in favour of an impost on wool being more equitable in its operation.

To do their work thoroughly during the next 18 months, Inspectors ought to have two horses—their present allowances hardly enable them to keep one. They ought to be independent of private hospitality: their present low rate of pay renders that altogether impossible. I do not mean by this that Inspectors should refuse to avail themselves of all private hospitality, for that would be almost impossible and often unnecessary. What I mean is, exactly what the words express,—that they should be independent of it.

I have the Returns of the Province of Canterbury, New Zealand, now before me. There I observe the impost on Sheep under the Scab Act is a half-penny per head. My proposition when the Act was first introduced here was, that one half-penny per head should be the contribution to the Scab Act Fund; and in that form it met the approval of the Sheepowners in the Legislative Council, but was reduced to one farthing in the House of Assembly. Various reasons were assigned for this reduction, but the principal and most effective one was that a half-penny per head would produce more than would be required to carry out the Act. Then the number of sheep in the country was estimated at over 1,700,000: instead of this, however, the number returned was very little over 1,400,000, last year it was little more than 1,340,000; and I have no reason to think that that number will be exceeded or even reached during the current year.

No doubt the half-penny per head would have produced more than would have been required the first year, but in that case a smaller amount might have been fixed for the following year's contribution.

The present fund, including fines and renewed licences on and after the 1st November next, will not be more than sufficient to keep up the present staff at the existing rate of pay. In my Report last year I pointed out that the number of Inspectors was insufficient, and I am still of that opinion. No doubt if they were enabled to keep two horses instead of one, they could do much more work, probably to the extent of an additional Inspector; and if the fund was raised by an impost on wool, instead of so much per head of sheep, it would so materially lessen my office work that I should be enabled to relieve Inspectors in the country to the extent of being equal to quite half the work of another Inspector. I could then more frequently relieve an Inspector of his fixed duties and send him to look up doubtful sheepowners in the outlying districts. This duty cannot be properly accomplished at present; and I fear this may retard the time when we ought, with a thoroughly effective staff, reasonably to expect to see the eradication of Scab fully accomplished throughout the Island.

In the neighbouring Colonies Sub-Inspectors' salaries and allowances are equal to the Chief Inspector's in Tasmania. The duties of Inspectors are not more onerous in Victoria than in Tasmania; and I am quite sure the advantages their services have conferred, and will confer, on the sheepowners here and the public at large are as great if not greater in proportion than in any one of the neighbouring Colonies.

If you will ask any intelligent sheepowner in Tasmania at the present time what his opinion is with reference to the beneficial operation of the Act, I feel very confident he will tell you that my calculations of profit in the aggregate were not exaggerated.

If it be a fact then (and I maintain that it is one) that the partial eradication of Scab has already materially enhanced the value of sheep, largely increased the incomes of sheepowners, and provided more wholesome food for the public at large, surely a matter of a few additional hundreds of pounds to provide an efficient staff of Inspectors ought to be of small importance.

Some sheepowners, large, medium, and small, formerly much opposed to a Scab Act, have admitted to me that their clip last year was about half a pound of wool per sheep more than they ever had before. And while they informed me of this, they also stated that that was only a part of the advantages they derived from having cleaned their sheep. One gentleman, who owns some 6000 sheep, occupies a good deal of rough country, and was very strongly opposed to the Scab Act, took occasion, when sending me his contribution in March last, to express his change of views regarding that measure in the following terms:—"I now say if you had brought the Scab Act into operation twenty years ago it would have been a blessing to me and others."

To illustrate the operation of this, and prove at the same time that I was not a theoretical enthusiast when I made my calculations of profit, I may mention that one of our large sheepowners—(he clipped about 16,000 sheep last year)—who was very strongly opposed to the Scab Act in the first place, informed me the other day that he had entirely changed his views on the subject, and that he considered his last year's clip (and the season was the reverse of a favourable one) yielded him about half a pound of wool per fleece more than he ever had before. This was a hot-water washed clip; so that the additional value arising from the increased weight, admittedly attributable to the operation of the Scab Act, would be at least 2s. or more per lb. on 8000 lbs. of wool, or £800. This gentleman's contribution to the Scab Act Fund on its present basis is £16 13s. 4d., assuming the number of his sheep to have been exactly 16,000.

I mention this gentleman's estimate of his increased quality of wool for several reasons. In the first place, he was very much afraid of and opposed to a Scab Act in Tasmania, because he thought it could not be worked: secondly, he is a very old settler and sheepowner, both in Victoria and Tasmania, and a gentleman well known for his general intelligence and keenness of observation; one in fact who may not inaptly be taken as a representative man to illustrate my arguments as to the advantages already derived from the Scab Act; the advantages to be further derived from it by

securing and increasing those already realised by himself and others; the necessity of increasing the Scab Act Fund, and the trifling importance to the sheepowner whether that fund is produced from an impost of a farthing per head or one half more, a halfpenny, or on the other hand abandoning the present system and taking it from a small impost of, say, 3s. per bale upon wool, or 1s. per one hundred pounds weight.

I am strongly in favour of the latter mode. Its simplicity, evenness of incidence, absence of irritation produced in the minds of a large number of sheepowners through being called upon to pay small sums through the Post Office at a stated time or incur a penalty for non-compliance with the law; its fairness in embracing all persons directly interested in the wool-producing interests; and its certainty of production, strongly commends it as the best mode of raising the amount required to carry out the objects of the Scab Act.

Probably some persons, without due consideration, may be influenced by objectors getting up and condemning such a proposition, not because it is unjust or ill calculated to meet the objects of the Act in an effectual manner, and without the trouble and irritation incidental to any measure for raising an impost of so much per head on sheep, but because they may deem it, as the cant phrase goes, an insertion of the thin end of the wedge which may in time lead to a permanent tax upon exports.

The fallacy of such an argument must be apparent to any one who will consider for a moment that the same argument would equally hold against the present impost of one farthing per head on sheep.

An impost of so much per hundred lbs. weight of wool, or so much per bale, for a special purpose solely and exclusively devoted to the eradication of a disease which lessens the quantity and detracts from the value of that particular article, cannot possibly with propriety be termed a tax upon exports; and any opposition to it based upon that argument must fail if the question is coolly and dispassionately dealt with as a measure for more effectually carrying out a sanitary law in no way affecting the principle of taxing the exports of a country for governmental purposes,—a question, in short, which ought to be considered purely on its merits without reference to party political considerations. It would be an impost for a special purpose, and of a very simple character, which by law could not exceed a certain amount or be devoted to any other purpose, and would, of course, be gradually reduced as the objects of the Act were accomplished.

I herewith append a rough estimate of several modes of raising the Scab Act Fund, calculated to increase it to such an amount as will provide the means of increasing the remuneration of the Inspectors so as to not only enable them to more effectually perform their duties, but remove them from temptations which the nature of those duties render men particularly liable to unless they are of a class that would scorn to abuse their office for considerations of pecuniary gain—in plain language, take bribes to eke out a salary on which they can barely keep up a respectable appearance.

I have no fear of any one of the present Inspectors abusing their office or failing in the performance of their duties for such considerations as I have referred to, even if their salaries are not increased; but I am quite sure that, unless their position is improved, they cannot do so much work as they might do if they were better paid; and the moment any of them can obtain something better than £150 per annum, they will at once avail themselves of the opportunity and leave the Service.

This I feel to be a most unsatisfactory state of things. The present Staff have now had experience, and are one and all thoroughly up to their work in every respect. I have the fullest confidence in their integrity, and should deem it a misfortune if any one of them was to intimate to me to-morrow that, something better having turned up, he proposed to resign. Some of the arguments I have used with respect to inadequate remuneration of Inspectors are by no means inapplicable to my own position.

The common belief amongst sheepowners is that I receive £700 or £800 a year; and, although a few of them have been disabused of this erroneous notion, the great majority still entertain it; and on more than one occasion, when I have had an opportunity of stating the amount of my Salary and Allowances, the statement has been received with extreme surprise, and in some cases it almost appeared to me with some incredulity.

It is not, however, with regard to myself that I desire to see the Scab Act Fund placed on a more satisfactory footing. If it cannot be so increased as to afford an increase to myself, I trust it will be placed in a position to enable the Government to increase the remuneration of Scab Inspectors: that I consider a matter of vital importance to the successful and rapid accomplishment of the objects of the Act. My work will be performed with the same energy whether my salary remains as it is or is increased to the fabulous amount of £700 or £800 a year, which it has been and still bears in the minds of the country settlers. My reputation is at stake in the matter, and that I value more than any consideration of a hundred or two a year more or less. Success in the

object I gave a tangible form and existence to, in the face of an opposition of so multiform and formidable a character that I am vain enough to think it would have proved an insurmountable barrier to very many men situated as I was and am, is dearer to me than any consideration of the amount of yearly stipend for the performance of the duties of Chief Inspector which has been or may be accorded to me.

I am quite aware that my salary, inadequate as it necessarily is, is as much as the fund on its present basis can bear, and I am therefore content with it. At the same time I hope I may be allowed to say without presumption, that my services in connection with the Scab Act ought not to be computed on the basis of what might be a liberal allowance to any one succeeding me.

I confidently believe the statistics of the Colony will prove that, in the face of a diminution in the number of sheep to the extent of nearly 400,000 arising from adverse seasons and other causes in no way connected with the Scab Act, the quantity of wool has been maintained in 1871, and promises to be maintained in 1872. This remarkable fact I believe to be attributable almost entirely to effects produced by the operation of the Scab Act, and is a much more powerful argument than any I can urge to prove the importance of effectively carrying out to completion a work of vast importance not only to that large section of the community engaged in the production of wool, but of very great importance to the country in a national point of view, by increasing the annual value of one of its chief exports, and at the same time securing a sufficient supply of wholesome food for its inhabitants.

I herewith forward for your perusal a copy of a letter I received a short time ago from the gentleman referred to in this communication as having informed me of the increased quantity of his last year's clip of wool, and his changed views on the Scab Act question.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES WHYTE, *Chief Inspector of Sheep.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

(Copy.)

Egleston, Macquarie River, Tasmania, 25th April, 1872.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE to thank you for your valuable Pamphlet containing the Scab Act and much other useful information, which came to hand yesterday. I spent the evening in carefully reading its contents, and I take this opportunity in saying that I *fully concur* in all the statements you make therein. I think your remarks in reference to the breeding and culling of sheep, if properly carried out, would do more than you say. I speak from experience: my flocks gave me 3lbs. per sheep washed in warm water last year, (but there was no loss from scab); had the flocks been in their usual state, about 2½lbs. would have been the return. I hope next clip will be an improvement on the last, as the young stock coming forward are the produce of rams worth from £5 to £10 each. I certainly expect at least 3½lbs. this coming season.

I quite think with you in respect to shearing at the Lakes; and to show you how correct your opinion is on this head, I enclose a sample of wool from some skins which came down from the Lakes on Monday last. I fancy it is cleaner than many clips washed in the low lands. I have 100 of these skins, and intend sending them to Melbourne for sale, just to let them see what we can produce here. I have sent two of my sons and some men up to the Lakes to erect dips, but hope they will *not be wanted*. I do not intend bringing my sheep down this winter.

I was much gratified to observe in Tuesday's *Gazette* that you had extended 18 months to 1st November. I think this all that sheepowners can expect or desire; perhaps in some remote districts you may deem it prudent to give a little more time.

I have been expecting the pleasure of seeing you for some time, as my son Thomas said you were coming up. We can give you rough quarters and a hearty welcome whenever you come.

Will you oblige me by sending me one of your valuable Pamphlets for my son Anthony at Lamont, Oatlands, to-morrow if convenient? I enclose 1s. worth of stamps for it.

John at Woodbury has one.

I am,

My dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

CHARLES HEADLAM.

JAMES WHYTE, *Esq., Hobart Town.*

JAMES BARNARD,
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.