

PAPERS

RELATIVE TO THE

INTERCHANGE OF COLONIAL PRODUCTS AND MANUFACTURES

BETWEEN THE

COLONIES OF AUSTRALASIA.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND OF HIS
EXCELLENCY.

WELLINGTON.

—
1870.

PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE INTERCHANGE OF COLONIAL PRODUCTS AND MANUFACTURES.

No. 1.

Copy of a Letter from the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Tasmania, to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY, New Zealand.

SIR,—

Tasmania, Colonial Secretary's Office, 16th August, 1870.

Herewith I have the honor to enclose you "A Bill to make better provision for the Interchange of Colonial Products and Manufactures between the Colonies of Australasia."

This Bill has been drafted for introduction into the Legislature of this Colony, with a view to giving effect to the resolution on the subject of intercolonial reciprocity unanimously passed by the late Conference in Melbourne, and is now submitted to the Government of New Zealand, in accordance with the undertaking given to the Conference by the representatives of the Government of Tasmania.

It will be seen that the Bill is almost identical with the Intercolonial Free Trade Bill of the Parliament of Tasmania, which was disallowed by Her Majesty on the advice of the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos.

The present draft, however, differs from the disallowed Bill in this particular, that no schedule of dutiable articles is appended to it.

It was thought desirable to render the measure as simple as possible, consistently with a clear appropriation to the Governor in Council of power to enter into such arrangements with the Governors of other Australasian Colonies, or with any of them, as would "allow of the reciprocal admission of their respective products and manufactures, duty free, on such terms as may be mutually agreed upon."

With this view, the only condition attached to the exercise of this power is one requiring that such arrangements shall be based upon absolute reciprocity.

For obvious fiscal considerations, spirits and tobacco are excepted from inclusion in any such reciprocal arrangement.

I entertain no doubt whatever that the Bill of which I transmit you a copy, or a very similar measure, will be passed by the Parliament of Tasmania in its next session, which will open on the 23rd instant, and I trust that your Government will take an early opportunity of inviting the Parliament of New Zealand to assent to a similar enactment.

There is the more occasion for promptitude in this matter, inasmuch as the legislation now contemplated must be accomplished, in the case of Victoria and New South Wales, by an amendment of their Constitution Acts, which can only be effected by Bills passed by two-thirds majorities of both Houses of Parliament in either colony, and reserved for the signification of Her Majesty's pleasure; while in the cases of New Zealand, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania, besides the delay incidental to a similar reservation, it may be necessary, if I am rightly informed, that an Act of the Imperial Parliament should be passed, empowering Her Majesty to assent to legislation in excess of the powers conferred upon Colonial Legislatures by the "Act for the better Government of the Australian Colonies," 13th and 14th Vict., cap. 50, section 27.

The Government of Tasmania has observed with extreme satisfaction that the Parliament of South Australia has already adopted a petition to the Queen, praying for the removal of all Imperial restrictions on the free interchange of products and manufactures between the colonies.

In your last communication on the subject of the proposed Intercolonial Free Trade Conference to be held in Melbourne, under date the 28th March last, while declining to assent to the suggestion of an Australian commercial federation on the basis of a common tariff, you intimated that the New Zealand Government "would be prepared to recommend the New Zealand Legislature to join those of the neighbouring colonies in asking for power, and, if necessary, in insisting on obtaining it, to make reciprocal tariff arrangements with other colonies and countries."

The resolution of the Conference which the Bill now submitted to you is designed to effectuate, deals only with the question of commercial reciprocity as between the colonies. It was thought undesirable to complicate that question by mixing it up with the larger question of reciprocity connections as between the colonies and foreign countries, irrespectively of Imperial treaties.

I venture to hope that the New Zealand Government will not refuse to co-operate with the Governments represented at the Conference to the extent indicated by the tenor of the draft Bill enclosed herewith.

The demand for "power to enter into reciprocal tariff arrangements with other colonies" would naturally pave the way for the concession of the larger power of treaty with foreign States, and you will probably agree with me that the concurrent legislation of the Australasian Colonies in the direction of intercolonial reciprocity would constitute the most effective practical protest against existing Imperial prohibitions of differential duties, and would forcibly impress Her Majesty's Government with a sense of the necessity for relaxing the restrictions which the British Legislature, in deference to treaty obligations, has hitherto imposed upon the free fiscal action of Her Majesty's self-governing dependencies.

I have, &c.,

J. M. WILSON.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, New Zealand.

Enclosure in No. 1.

A BILL to make better Provision for the Interchange of Colonial Products and Manufactures between the Colonies of Australasia.

WHEREAS the free interchange between the Colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, New Zealand, and Tasmania of their respective products and manufactures is restricted by reason of the obligation which is now by law imposed upon the said Colonies to subject such products and manufactures, upon admission into any of the said Colonies, to the same duties of customs as are imposed upon the like products and manufactures when the same are imported from other places: And whereas such restriction prejudicially affects the trade and commerce between the said Colonies, and it is desirable that such restriction should be removed or modified: And whereas it is necessary to this end that each of the said Colonies should be empowered to make arrangements with the others for the interchange of their respective products and manufactures on such terms as may be mutually agreed upon: Be it therefore enacted by His Excellency the Governor of Tasmania, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly, in Parliament assembled, as follows:—

1. The Governor, by and with the advice of the Executive Council, may enter into an agreement with the Governors of the Colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and New Zealand, or with any of them, for the admission into Tasmania of all or any of the products and manufactures (except spirits and tobacco) of the said Colonies, or any of them, free from customs duty, wharfage, or other charge, or at such reduced duty and charges as the Governor in Council thinks fit: Provided that every Colony with whose Governor such agreement shall be entered into shall agree to admit the products and manufactures of Tasmania or some of them (except spirits and tobacco) either free from all duties and charges, or at such reduced duties and charges as may be agreed upon.

2. Any such agreement may be entered into for a period not exceeding ten years.

3. Every such agreement may be altered or rescinded by the Governor in Council of Tasmania, with the consent of the Governor of every Colony who is a party to such agreement, but not otherwise.

4. The Governor shall, by proclamation to be published in the *Gazette*, declare and make known the products and manufactures which are, under such agreement, exempted from duty and charges or subjected to reduced duty and charges as the case may be, and thereupon such products and manufactures may be imported free of duty, wharfage, or other charge, or subject to such reduced duty or charge as is set forth in such proclamation, so long as such agreement as aforesaid continues in force.

5. Every alteration or rescission of any such agreement shall be made known by proclamation to be published in the *Gazette*.

6. The Governor in Council may make orders for carrying this Act into effect, and for determining what articles come within its provisions; and any such orders may from time to time be altered or rescinded by the Governor in Council: Provided that all such orders shall be published in the *Gazette*.

7. This Act may be cited as "The Intercolonial Free Trade Act."