

PLEASE NOTE

**DATE OBSCURED;
SHOULD READ
SYDNEY, SATURDAY
MAY 4, 1844**

The Guardian.

"WITH HEARTS RESOLVED, AND HANDS PREPARED,
THE BLESSINGS WE ENJOY TO GUARD."

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF POLITICS, COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE, LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ARTS, FOR THE MIDDLE AND WORKING
CLASSES OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

No. 8.

SYDNEY, SATURDAY, MAY 1844.

Vol. I.

THE SQUATTERS' PETITION.

In reply to a charge made by us in our last number, that the petition of the Squatters to the Home government was being privately printed, and circulated amongst the members of the Pastoral Association, and that the reason for such privacy is in reference to certain statements made in the petition with regard to the present price and demand for labour; the *Herald* denies that any secrecy is intended! It admits that a rough draft of the petition is being printed. It admits that it may contain the objectionable statements to which we have referred, but says in excuse that it is confident that when the petition is finished and agreed to, it will be advertised in every newspaper in the colony.

We accept the plea put in by the *Herald*. We believe that when a petition has been agreed upon by the squatters generally, when the assent of the whole body has been irrevocably pledged to certain documents that it will be blazoned before the public eye.

But we deny that this plea is in any shape a refutation of the charges against the squatters.

If the "rough draft" of the petition is a crude unfinished document, for what purpose is it printed and circulated amongst the members. It is a mere trap for such of the squatters who might be otherwise induced to see with their own eyes; and judge by the feelings of their own minds—a trap baited with self-interest. A document is drawn up, which glazes eloquently over the squatters' grievances; sets forth, what we all know well enough, the disproportion between the expenditure and the revenue of the squatter. It expatiates on the item of labour, and without any reference to the peculiar state of the times; to the eating up of profits by interest of money; the depreciation in the price of produce; the positive absence of all markets for stock—makes that item the scapegoat of the squatters' sufferings.

We repeat, that to dare to attempt to graft the insidious design of renewed emigration to a labour market like ours, at a time like the present—on the resistance movement of the squatters against arbitrary and unconstitutional regulations—a movement countenanced and assisted by the working classes themselves—is most ungenerous, most dishonest. What guarantee have we, even although the squatters should have practical honesty, and practical wisdom enough, to reject the obnoxious clause, that the members to whom the "rough draft" has been sent may not have despatched it home? What security have we that that "rough draft," though it be amended here, may not be taken in England as the expression called forth by a movement in which the sympathies of all classes were enlisted?

We know well here the difference between the "rough draft" and the genuine document, but will they 16,000 miles off?

We assert the contrary. An indistinct rumour of a petition of the squatters against certain arbitrary restrictions will get abroad, and any document bearing such a title will be received as genuine. We doubt much whether, in the course of a month after its arrival, when it turns up to be replied to, whether the "rough draft" and the *bona fide* petition will be clearly distinguished in the Colonial Office. Greater inaccuracies have

occurred; greater inattentions have caused us to wonder.

The printing and circulating this "rough draft" is neither more nor less than the utterance of a forgery with intent to defraud the labouring classes. It is a political felony, and should be treated as such.

If the squatters wish to act fairly and in good faith with the people, let them make public their "rough draft." We can vouch that it has already passed out of legitimate hands, and the working classes have a word or two to say in the matter, which may tend materially to assist the deliberations of the squatters as to the wisdom of asking for more labour.

ARRIVAL OF EMIGRANTS.

ON Monday last, by the arrivals of the *United Kingdom* and *Elizabeth*, the former from Liverpool and the latter from Cork, an addition to the labouring population of the colony was made of five hundred and eighty souls.

If those who advised, and selfishly clamoured for this reckless inundation of labour into a redundant market, can look around and view the destitute condition of the poor of Sydney, and reconcile to their own consciences the selfish impulses by which they have been actuated, it is but little that we can hope to effect by the appeal of reason made to them.

Even if labour were wanted in the country districts—and we distinctly aver that the want is not beyond the offered supply—it would still be impossible but that from one to two hundred out of this number should remain in Sydney.

A very considerable number of these emigrants are artisans and mechanics; a large proportion of them are troubled with wives and incumbrances; some there are, and must be, unequal, and many unwilling, to dare the hardships of the bush; and thus to gratify the selfish outcry of the grazier and the agriculturist, the starving population of Sydney must be still further oppressed. The little impulse that this addition to our population may give to tardy operations, will be too slight to be felt further than the rise of price it may give to articles of necessity in the city; and this rise, if it takes place, will be but temporary, and benefit the dealer only.

It is true, that as the thousand emigrants who arrived two months ago have, according to Mr. Hamilton, reduced the rate of wages 25 or 30 per cent., that the present five hundred may be expected to depress them 12 or 15 per cent. below even that reduction; and in such a position we very much doubt whether the conditions of the agreements which were then entered into between the employers and the new arrivals, will be satisfactorily complied with, when settling day comes round.

The only real effect of this most unseasonable and most unjust revival of emigration will be, that the country employer, in accordance with his darling project, will be enabled to supply himself with single men, whilst the crowded streets and hovels of Sydney will be filled with the naked destitution of parents and children clamorous for bread.

In the whole course of recorded political events, which have come under our notice, we remember none which bears on its front

so strongly the stamp and impress of class selfishness as this emigration system: it began in lavish and precipitate compliance with the demand of the flockmasters, and it has been perpetuated in conformity with the interests of the same class, until the financial resources of the colony are exhausted, and the labouring men reduced to penury and want. And even at this point—the insatiable avarice—the greedy grasp of the spoiler of the poor man's revenue is unsatisfied.

But so surely as their sins of selfishness and cruelty have been great so will their retribution be heavy; a retribution arising out of the short-sightedness and injustice of their own measures.

THE UNEMPLOYED WORKING CLASSES.

In our former articles under this heading, we have endeavoured to show that great and pressing distress exists among the labouring classes; that the Government have admitted and recognised that distress, but have done nothing to remedy it; and lastly, that the interest of the employer tends to the perpetuation of this distress by the introduction of more labour, in order to fix permanently the rate of wages in this colony at a low standard. We mean not to say that if the employers were at present in a position to hold out that relief which the working classes require, that they would withhold it for the purpose of grinding down the labourer into the acceptance of a permanently low rate of wages. We do not think they would go so far as this; but burdened as they are at present with the incubus of borrowed money, and a depreciated product, they cannot afford to advise those fair and proper measures of relief which certainly are required in the present crisis. We also showed that the first duty to which the combined efforts of the working classes should be directed, was the procuring employment by which to derive a livelihood; and to this end we urged a renewed application to the Executive Government.

We shall now proceed to state what appears to us to be reasonable grounds for such application—grounds which, we think, are sufficiently strong to overcome the examples of financial parsimony which have hitherto been opposed by Sir George Gipps to every prayer of the suffering working classes.

To breathe much of hope, even although we spoke with the tongue of angels, would be but a delusion; but it is not the less our duty to point out what might be done, although the hard and selfish hand of authority, may stay the doing of it. At all events, it is quite clear that if in this appeal the working classes are again rejected by the local Government, they must, for the future—even though their hearts grow sick in the deferment of hope—look for redress to a higher power, and petition the Queen, through her minister, rather than minister's appointed servant.

We confess, that what appears dark almost to despair on this side of the Pacific, assumes a brighter hue when we compare the claims of the working classes, with the measures of the Colonial Minister and the Imperial Parliament; and if we now once more endeavour to claim the adder-like ear of our Local Governor, it is with the

faint belief that even he may at last be brought to the conviction that, in refusing the relief so loudly cried for, he is not acting in accordance with the policy of those in whose hands the tenure of his office rests.

Whilst the hands in which the control of our territorial revenue should be vested is a *questio vexata* which is being at present fiercely discussed through almost all classes of the community, there is one point relative to that revenue in which all opinions join harmoniously, and regarding which no difference of sentiment prevails.

That point of argument is, as to the purposes to which this revenue should be applied; and we believe that we are not asserting too much when we say that it is conceded on all hands that these purposes should be purely colonial; that the territorial revenue is a fund which, in the strictest sense, should be applied to the improvement and benefit of the colony; that any direct object, short of this, is an abuse—a misappropriation of that fund—and a fraud upon the colonists; nor do we reiterate this position as an argument adapted to the peculiar condition of New South Wales, but as an admitted principle in the general theory of colonization.

In fact, in modern times, the waste lands of a colony, and the revenue derivable therefrom, must be looked upon as the means whereby stability and purpose may be given to individual enterprise in the development of the resources of the colony. Now, it is quite incompatible with the admission of this principle to appropriate any part of such fund to the particular benefit of a particular class; for just in that amount of particular benefit which is conferred on such class, will all other classes be defrauded. The appropriation of this fund must be for purposes, in the benefits arising from which the whole community may participate; and for ourselves, we would carry the principle further, and apply it to purposes only, which would be permanent in the advantages they afforded to such community.

Perhaps the strongest recognition of the principle that this fund is to be applied only to purposes of general good, is to be found in the late Act of the Imperial Parliament for the regulation of such territorial revenue.

This act, after distinctly affirming that the revenue arising out of the waste lands of colonies should be applied to colonial purposes, proceeds to enact that one-half of such Revenue shall be applied to the carrying on of public works of necessity and utility in the colony, and the remaining portion should be devoted to the purposes of emigration.

Now, it is quite clear, that whatever may be the opinion in the colony as to the necessity of a large importation of labour, that at home an equally strong impression exists as to the necessity of providing employment for it.

It is indeed difficult to conceive any plan that so effectually disarms any appearance of class application of territorial funds as this; for whilst the amount that would be spent in emigration would more directly at least appear to favour the interest of the employer; and by increasing the supply, to lower the price of labour, the amount that