

109/A6/8.

MEMORIAL

TO THE

HONOURABLE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOURABLE COUNCIL,

We, the undersigned inhabitants of the Colony of Van Diemen's Land, having witnessed for some time, with feelings of anxiety, regret, and alarm, the great and increasing amount of immorality, crime, and domestic wretchedness induced by habits of intemperance, do earnestly memorialise your Honourable Council to take a subject so important to the public welfare into mature consideration at your earliest convenience, and to enact a law similar to that which is now in operation in several States of North America, to the effect "THAT IT SHALL BE ILLEGAL TO MANUFACTURE, SELL, OR BARTER INTOXICATING DRINKS, SAVE FOR MECHANICAL OR MEDICINAL PURPOSES."

The dreadful amount of crime and immorality consequent on intemperance is acknowledged and lamented by the Judges and Magistrates, and by all Ministers of religion: and is stated by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor to be not less than "nine-tenths of the crime committed in the Colony."

The number of convictions for drunkenness in Hobart Town during the year 1853 was 2400. Convictions for crimes consequent on drunkenness, 1100, total 3,500; shewing in a population of 23,000 an average of 10 convictions daily caused by drunkenness. The fees and fines on drunkenness, in the Magisterial Courts, have increased from £2147, in 1850, to £5106, in 1853. The annual cost to the public for Police and Gaols exceeds £60,000.

The average number of executions in this Colony for the last three years was 12, or one criminal executed each month for crimes frequently induced by intemperance.

In the small population of this island the number of Coroners' Inquests during the year 1853, was no less than 279; the verdicts in 26 cases, was death caused by drunkenness; but no doubt can be entertained that the majority of this most awful number of sudden deaths was induced more or less directly through the effects of intemperance.

In this small community, there are no less than 251 lunatics confined in the public asylums, the great majority of whom, we have reason to believe, have lost the use of their understanding through intemperance. In the Hobart Town Colonial Hospital the diseases of many of the patients have been caused by intemperance. In 1853 there were 37 cases of paralysis, and 36 cases of madness, or loss of reason; both for the most part, occasioned by excessive drinking. Of 21 cases of *delirium tremens*, 6 terminated in death.

We would respectfully draw your attention to the following document, signed by 2000 Medical Practitioners in the United Kingdom of high reputation, which fully justifies us in asserting that alcoholic drinks are destructive to the health and morals of the community:—

1. "That a large portion of human misery, including poverty, disease, and crime, is induced by the use of alcoholic or fermented liquors, as beverages.
2. That the most perfect health is compatible with total abstinence from all such intoxicating beverages, whether in the form of ardent spirits, or as wines, beer, ale, cider, &c. &c.
3. That persons accustomed to such drinks may with perfect safety discontinue them entirely, either at once, or gradually after a short time.
4. That total and universal abstinence from alcoholic liquors and intoxicating beverages of all sorts, would greatly contribute to the health, the prosperity, the morality and happiness of the human race."

We would call the attention of the Honorable Council to the quantity of wine and spirits, which paid duty during the year 1853:—

In 1853, the quantity of spirits imported, was	184,244 galls.
Ditto, wine	166,000 galls.
The duty on spirits, amounted to	£90,319.
Ditto, on wine	£8,900.

This is exclusive of porter, ale, and Colonial beer; the last of which is highly intoxicating, and largely consumed by the labouring classes.

In the Hobart Town District there are upwards of 180 public-houses; the amount of intemperance in which is beyond calculation. The number of public-houses com-

placed with the population, estimated at 23,000, gives one public-house to each 127 inhabitants, including women and children. Out of every TWENTY-THREE houses in Hobart Town, ONE is a Public-House.

At a low estimate, the sum paid to the public-houses and other beer and spirit dealers by the people of this colony, amounts to—for spirits, £500,000, for wines, £100,000, and for porter, ale, and beer, to probably much more than, £100,000—so that at least £700,000 is expended by the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land upon intoxicating drinks.

In Hobart Town the sums received annually by the beer and spirit dealers, and by the 180 public-houses, cannot be less than £270,000, which gives the enormous sum of £12, paid yearly by each inhabitant, including women and children, for intoxicating drinks.

Taking into consideration the fearful amount of crime induced by habits of intemperance, and the heavy expenses consequent thereupon—the deaths, diseases, impoverishment, and lunacy, as well as the cruel treatment and abandonment of families and children—the habits of idleness and disinclination to labour, and the obstruction to the influences of religion and morality engendered by indulgence in intoxicating drinks—the testimony of medical practitioners as to the injurious effects of alcoholic liquors, together with the excessive number of licensed houses, we would earnestly beseech your Honourable Council to provide an effective remedy for an evil so general and destructive, by enacting a law similar to that now in operation in the State of Maine ; which must, by its natural effect, not only entirely banish intemperance and all its consequent evils from the community, but will remove the oppression with which it weighs upon the moral and physical energies of the people, and be the surest means of promoting their social and domestic happiness, and their advancement in wealth, knowledge, and religion.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Maine Law.

Petition to Leg. Council.