

INTRODUCTORY REPORT.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT STATIST,
Melbourne, 17th November 1874.

SIR,

I have the honor to present herewith a series of tables embodying statistical information, brought down to the end of 1873, relating to the five colonies upon the Australian continent and to Tasmania and New Zealand.

2. In order to procure the matter for compiling these tables, a form which I drew up, containing enquiries with blank spaces for replies, was forwarded by the Government of Victoria, about the beginning of last August, to the Government of each of the other colonies, accompanied with a request that the form might be filled up and returned as soon as possible.

3. In process of time these forms were sent back, with the desired information duly entered, so far as it could be obtained from the records of the respective colonies. Since the receipt of the last return no delay has occurred beyond that absolutely necessary to complete the entries and calculations and to print the present document.

4. A copy of the form sent out to the various colonies is reprinted as an appendix.* It will be seen that it embodies no enquiry which, under a proper statistical system, should not be easily answerable by the middle of the year succeeding that for which the information might be required. Present experience has, however, shown that scarcely any of the colonies were able to furnish the information until considerably later, and, even up to the present date, some of them have been unable to supply it fully.

5. This circumstance, in itself, speaks volumes in favor of the necessity for a mutual understanding between the colonies in regard to uniformity in the compilation of their official statistics. It will be remembered that a resolution of the Intercolonial Conference, held in Sydney during the months of January and February 1873, affirmed the desirability of such uniformity, and recommended that a plan for its attainment should be prepared by the Governments of Victoria and New South Wales.

6. Since then the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Carnarvon, has requested that the Australasian colonies should mutually agree upon a scheme for the compilation, upon a uniform system, of one of the most important sections of the statistics, namely, those relating to Crimes and Convictions.

7. In order to settle upon a satisfactory basis the general question embodied in the resolution of the Sydney Conference, and at the same time to comply as far as possible with the wishes of the Secretary of State, I venture respectfully to suggest that the heads of the Statistical departments of all the colonies should meet in conference, and that they should be empowered to consider the two questions jointly. I would strongly urge that such a conference should take place in one or other of the capitals at an early date.

* Page 13 *post*.

8. The attempt to procure comparative statistics of these colonies systematically was first originated by His Excellency Sir Hercules Robinson, the present Governor of New South Wales, who, both this year and last, forwarded to the Governor of Victoria, His Excellency Sir George Ferguson Bowen, a most interesting table containing statistics of the Australasian colonies under some of the more prominent heads. Most if not all the particulars embraced in the latest of those tables are also given here, and many fresh facts are introduced. The figures, however, published by Sir Hercules Robinson differ sometimes considerably from those in the present tables, especially those relating to New Zealand, from which colony His Excellency states he was unable to procure a direct return.

9. It is my intention, with approval, to continue the publication of statistics similar to those now presented from year to year. I trust I may find it possible in future to obtain the information necessary for their preparation at a much earlier date than upon this occasion.

10. It has been my aim to make the tables as comprehensive and clear as possible, and they will, I believe, speak for themselves. Were I to extend this report so as to give a complete digest of their contents I might, perhaps, make the information still plainer; but the value of such an analysis would, I conceive, scarcely compensate for the time which its preparation and printing would occupy, and the consequent risk of the statistics being delayed too late to enable them to be presented to Parliament during the present Session.

11. Trusting that the information I have obtained and formulated may be of service, not only to this colony, but to the other colonies of the group, as well as to all persons seeking information on, or taking an interest in, the communities inhabiting this portion of Her Majesty's Dominions,

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

HENRY HEYLYN HAYTER,

Government Statist.

The Honorable Robert Ramsay, M.P.,

&c., &c., &c.