
Foundation Documents – transcript – PRG 1002/2

Extracts from the Diary of John Brown, 1835-1836

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1835

23 FebrY. Since I began more decidedly to devote myself to the Plan for Colonizing South Australia, I have frequently thought it an object so important in itself, and in its probable consequences, that a Journal of the events falling under the notice of any one of those who took an active part I promoting it, would be, one day or another, interesting if not valuable.

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We have, in the first place, an Act of Parliament, passed the last day of the last Sessions, for the Colonization of South Australia, on a plan never yet attempted. This Act was brought in by the Liberal Party, and permitted to pass, with little opposition, by the Tories. Our first proposed Commissioners were all Liberals; & that List was sanctioned by the Colonial Office & Mr. Spring Rice under the Melbourne Ministry. When these proposed Commissioners withdrew their consent to act, because the Ministry no longer held office, we were driven in some degree to consider the politics of our new Men, lest the Colonial Office should act upon the same absurd rule, and refuse to Gazette the second list of Commissioners because of politics differing from the Party in Power.

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1835

April 3. Gouger came to Town without getting my letter. He went to the Treasury, learnt that the business will go before the Lords of the Treasury immediately. In the evening I went to see Col'l. Napier with Dr.Wright. His book containing remarks on our Colony will be out in a few days. E.Wakefield is in town but he has not seen him. We saw the Colonel's daughters. Very interesting girls.

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1835

Thursday 30 April. Accompanied Gouger to the Wyndham Club to meet Torrens. Torrens has seen Hay about Gouger this morning & Hay says that Gouger is to be Commissioner

instead of Colonial Secretary. There appears some trick in this, and in consequence Torrens went immediately to Grant to learn the reason, if possible; & Gouger to Lefevre. The latter has expressed a wish to be added to the Commission. Lefevre said that he knew Rice wished some time ago that some friend of his should be Colonial Secretary & advised Gouger to accept the other office. Torrens did not see Grant. There appears some juggle to get rid of Gouger. If he accepts the Commission he manifestly is unfit for it. There must be someone under him to do the duties & consequently he will soon loose standing in the Colony. Besides there is immediate ground for dissatisfaction on the part of Kennedy & then on that of Napier. We cannot find the reason.

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1835

May 5th Today presuming the Commissioners would be Gazetted I sent in to the Colonial Office a renewal of the application I made before for the office of Accountant General. With a very singular prejudice Gouger has taken it into his head to imagine that I am the person for whom Rice has reserved the Secretaryship! I called on Thomas today who allowed me to use his introduction to Lefevre again, & I therefore saw him & assured that he will not oppose me in my application to the Commissioners as Treasurer, which not believing it very probable that I shall be Accountant General I intend to make. We watched the appearance of the Gazette this afternoon with some anxiety, and were not a little pleased at finding our labours crowned with success at last. The following is an extract:-
Downing Street May 4 1835

The King has been pleased to appoint Robert Torrens, William Alexander Mackinnon M.P., William Hutt M.P., John George Shaw Lefevre, George Palmer Junr., John Wright, Jacob Montefiore, Samuel Mills, George Fife Angas, and Edward Barnard Esquires to be His Majesty's Commissioners for carrying into effect certain parts of the Act passed in the last session of Parliament, intitaled "An Act to empower His Majesty to erect South Australia into a British Province or Provinces, and to provide for the Colonization and Government thereof", the said Commissioners to be styled "The Colonization Commissioners for South Australia."

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1835

May 7th Obtained Torrens's appendix to his proposed Pamphlet, and have promised that out Report on Land shall be immediately done. Torrens has given a most impracticable scheme in his book. I wrote a note today to Hill at Gouger's suggestion offering to help him in any way in my power in the Secretaryship.

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Monday May 11th.The commissioners met at No.8 Adam St. at 1 o'clock. Torrens, Hutt, Angas, & Lefevre form a sub-committee to consider the price of land. Hill is appointed Secretary. Gilles affirmed today that he had been applying for the Treasurership. He did not say to whom but "to the proper quarter and that he had been promised." In consequence of this I called Gouger out of the Commissioners' room and told him of Hay's letter & of Gilles' assertion. I pointed out to him that if I missed the appointment I should be completely thrown out of the business and that I therefore begged him if an opportunity occurred to name my wishes to the Commissioners and secure their attention. I also said that understanding there was a difficulty about providing for current expenses until a treasurer was appointed and authorized to act I would advance 250 (pounds) for that purpose. The Commissioners directed me to make the application in writing and Angas expressed himself very strongly upon the subject of my negative from the Colonial Office. After the meeting Gouger spoke to Torrens and to Hutt in my favour and both promised me their support. Ordered the seal for the Commissioners & agreed with Rowland Hill to attend daily at the rooms at 10 o'clock. The Colony is transferred at eth Colonial Office from Hay to Sir George Grey. This took place on Saturday.

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Tuesday 12 May. Yesterday Hutt mentioned to Sir G. Grey Gouger's wish to be Coll. Secretary. It appears the place is not yet filled up. G. has had a letter from Napier which commences by saying that the Wakefields first invited him over!

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Friday 15 May. Hutt took my amended letter, but nothing was done about it as the Board appeared to be in a bad humour all day. Hill was appointed secretary, but not until $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour's opposition raised by the Tories who wanted to get in the son of Dyer the Middlesex Magistrate! One who can know nothing of the matter instead of one who has laboured efficiently at it for years!

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Page 33 (Thursday May 21st)

Yesterday, it appears, Napier so offended the Commissioners that Barnard went to Hay to request the appointment of someone else. Torrens and Napier had almost high words. Gouger says Torrens has frequently expressed a wish that he should himself be Governor & Hutt said he hoped Torrens entertained no such idea.... Gouger told Hutt that he and I

were the two who went for Napier & that strongly as we then urged & wished his appointment we were both disgusted by his late dilatoriness and present interested conduct. Hutt said the only apology he could make for him was that he was insane.....

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1836 (Jan)

Tuesday 5th. Gouger, Fisher, R. Hill & myself talked over the matter of Aborigines. We propose the establishment of a new office, a Protector of the Aborigines; the payment by way of annual tribute to the natives of a certain quantity of food and clothing; the amount to be equivalent to the value of the land to them which we may occupy; the limit of the right of sporting to the surveyed ground. The limitation of the surveys to such lands as shall be unoccupied by natives & the granting rent-free, to any native who may desire to settle as a civilized being & cultivate land, so much land as he may cultivate.

Thursday 7th Jany. Colonel Torrens this morning suggested to me that should the Government determine to appoint a Protector of the Aborigines, the Commissioners were exceedingly anxious that the office should be in the hands of one who in addition to his fitness for the particular duties of it, thoroughly understood the principles of the Colony...

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Monday 25. Saw Colonel Light for the first time, I like his appearance. Officers meeting in the evening The Governor attended, & we appear to have really commenced work. Plans for all the Buildings are to be ready tomorrow, A also of the Stores.

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Wednesday 10. I hear from Gouger today that Wakefield, Coll. Torrens and Gilles (!) are at work getting up a new Company. There is to be a subscribed capital of 3 or 4 millions & it is to embrace all parties & to promote Emigration on a great general national scale.....The board have determined upon hiring the Cygnet & buying the Rapid. (ships)

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17th. The board have confirmed their purchase of the Rapid for 1700 (pounds) & both vessels are to be ready by the 10 March.

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Monday 22.I find that gouger's friend Brown has done nothing about the Mining Affair, & that Stephens has hear all about it. Gilles is exceedingly vexed at it, that he has not been consulted. Morphett & Gliddon called here in the evening. I find Angas & the Company very irritated about the proceedings of the Comrs. Generally. There is a deal of ill-blood between them and where it originates I know not.

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Monday 2 May. The Governor has returned to Town to make arrangements for the passage of people in the Buffalo. A sub-committee will immediately proceed to details.

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Monday 16. ...Went on board the Africaine with gouger and concluded our bargain for our passage with the owner. We are each to have a stern cabin. The vessel is commodius and well arranged. There will be 3 cabins in the state room and we have undertaken to fill her with freight and passengers, that is to find 12 cabin passengers, 10 intermediate, and 40 steerage, with 300 tons of Freight....

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Monday 23rd. On board the Africaine. Called on Mrs. Gouger and Mrs. Higgins, bride-visits. Thomas has taken his passage by the Africaine, and Everard. Heard in the rooms that Howard is to go in the Buffalo after all, altho' Currie arranged his passage by the Africaine on Saturday with Findlay, who behaved very liberally, taking the 3 & the 2 children for 180 (pounds).

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June

Sunday 19th. Mann called here. He has had a dust with the Gov. about his passage. It appears that he asked to have a passage in the Africaine some time ago when he was told that the Governor expected him to go in the Buffalo. The other day he again spoke to the Govr. Stating that he should be greatly in inconvenienced, unless he had a cabin to himself. This the Gov. said it was too late to arrange and got rather angry. Mann wrote to the Comrs. Asking for a whole cabin or a passage in another vessel.....