

Selling Tasmania

Boosterism and the Creation of the Tourist State
1912-1928

by

Simon Harris

BA (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania

August 1993

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution. To the best of the candidate's knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



ABSTRACT

Selling Tasmania—Boosterism and the Creation of the Tourist State, 1912-28

This thesis traces a shift in public policy. Its title “Selling Tasmania” is double-edged. Not only do we discuss the advertising of the island to “outsiders”. In fact that issue is minor. Tourist advocates in the first quarter of the century concentrated much of their efforts on “educating” the Tasmanians themselves. In the period 1912-1928 tourism in Tasmania went from being a trade to an industry. As such it demanded “national” outlook and organisation. In 1914 a state Tourist Department was established under the Commissioner of railways. A Director formulated state-wide policies aimed at distributing tourists over a broader geographical and temporal range. This demanded infrastructural investment in roads and accommodations and the campaigns for both helped convince “non-tourist” interests that tourist arguments could be employed in many areas. Tasmania, an island, also found tourism a valuable bargaining chip in its constant battle for adequate shipping facilities. Throughout the period less and less people found reason to voice doubts about Tasmania taking the tourist road.

Although centralisation of tourist organisation under the Director brought immediate and steady growth, a number of commercial and regional interests were less than satisfied with the status quo. In 1923, after a Royal commission into the railways, the Director was removed from office and the Departmental vote for advertising reduced. Then followed a period of testing whether voluntary business-led organisation could fill the Director’s role. Despite some remarkable successes in state-wide organisation, regionalism and lack of proper management saw the government left with little option but to restore affairs to the 1914-23 model. Never since has a Tasmanian government forsaken the industry.

The above events were not decided within government or the public service. Instead the state’s acceptance of financial responsibility for tourist promotion and regulation resulted from the efforts of “boosters”. In the course of the thesis a “commercial-civic elite” is identified. Existing in subsets in the two cities and many towns of the island, they also formed a pan-Tasmanian elite, displaying rivalry at times but basically like-minded. The boosters were the “movers and shakers” of society, essentially bourgeois, imbued with ethics of civic responsibility, and certain that benefit to them meant benefit throughout the community. It was the boosters who kept tourism on the agenda through the period 1912-1928. They convinced government that the tourist industry was “honourable” and worthy of taxpayer investment. Eventually government also came to realise that the Tourist Department afforded a useful tool for bolstering public morale, for Selling Tasmania to the Tasmanians.

By no means a “class analysis”, the thesis nevertheless provides insights into the ruling ideology of Tasmanian urban bourgeois business elites in the period. It brings politics into an area of historical study dominated by geographers, sociologists and economists. Its observations, based on the Tasmanian case study, claim applicability to Australia in general and in fact much of the industrial-capitalist world. While it is in many ways “local history”, reference is made to comparative developments elsewhere. The thesis is therefore a foray into “business history” and “administrative history”, both much-neglected in the Australian genre. Themes also reviewed are parochial conflict and “state-nationalism”, state-federal relations, the regulation-deregulation cycle, technological change, developmentalism, propagandism and “boosterism”. It reflects upon such concepts as “civic pride”, “hegemony”, “natural leadership”, and the media’s role as publicists of the “advertising classes”.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First reference in this section goes naturally to my supervisors, Professors Richard Davis and Michael Roe. Both have provided many hours of fruitful discussion and criticism. The intellectual influence of Roe, especially, will be appreciated by readers of this thesis. With his depth of knowledge of the particularities of Tasmanian history and its place in the broad stream of Western civilisation, he remains an inspiration to all workers in the field.

Among the many others who have given occasional assistance to this project I must mention: Stephan Petrow, Law Librarian, University of Tasmania; Barbara Valentine, of the Tasmaniana Library, a willing accomplice now, sadly, retired; the staffs of the Archives Office of Tasmania, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Australian Archives, Canberra, and the Department of Tourism Sport and Recreation, especially John Koldowski.

For being of sound and entertaining mind, I am indebted to my oral history “sources”: Don Norman, Marcus Hurburgh, Sir Raymond Ferrall, Dorothy Brownell, Frank Carter, Kingsley Fairweather & Joan Goodrick.

Providers of moral support are invaluable asset to all who take the lonely path of history writing. I have been well endowed in this regard and must tender heartfelt appreciation here to: Kati Thomson, Michael Bennett, Louise Gill, Em Underwood and Wang Dagang, in the History Department, University of Tasmania.

Finally, for assistance beyond all unreasonable expectations, thanks to Marc Harris, Marita Bardenhagen, Warwick Harris, and my wife Liu Su.

The following work is dedicated to my Mother.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	viii
1 INTRODUCTION—TASMANIAN BOOSTERS	1
PART ONE—THE CENTRALISATION MOVEMENT	12
2 CONTROL IN THE CAPITAL.....	13
The Impetus for Nationalisation	15
A Harbinger of Change—The Tourist-Railways Connection.....	16
Allies 'in the business'	17
The Campaign Begins	20
Counter Moves.....	22
Interstate Competition and the Need for Mainland Bureaux	23
Parochial Pressure—Government and Parliament.....	24
ET Emmett—'Father' of Tasmanian Tourism	26
The Melbourne Bureau	28
Promotional Efforts	30
Voluntarism in Crisis	31
Political Will—A New Government Investigates.....	33
A Super-Department to Sell Tasmania?.....	35
Urgency and Expedience.....	37
Nationalisation Achieved	38
Conclusion.....	40
3 CONTROL CONSOLIDATED.....	41
Attitudes towards Tourism	41
The Government Tourist Bureau—Hobart	44
Defining Roles.....	47
Extending Tasmania's Mainland Presence—Sydney	50
Satisfying the North	53
The Northern Tasmanian League	56
Departmental Attitudes.....	58
Southern Alarm.....	61
Forms of Consensus.....	63
A Deal Struck.....	66
A Doubts Removal Act.....	68
PART TWO—THE EARLY FATE OF CENTRALISM	70
4 THE 'VITAL LINK'—EXTERNAL TRANSPORT PROBLEMS.	72
The Bass Strait Crossing	72
Endless Troubles.	75
Flu!	81
Better Times?	90

5	RESORTS AND ACCOMMODATION.....	93
	"Seasonality" and Winter Sports Resorts.....	93
	The 'All-Year-Round' Movement.....	95
	TGTD Publicity and Organisation.....	97
	Infrastructure Demands—National Parks.....	98
	A Long-Term Campaign.....	102
	Resort Development— Other Tasmanian Tourist Attractions.....	103
	An Angler's Paradise—The Inland Fisheries.....	103
	Underworld Mysteries—The Limestone Caves.....	109
	Seaside resorts.....	115
	Beds, Breakfasts and Booze—Accommodation for Tourists.....	118
	Commercial Houses.....	118
	Government Accommodation Houses.....	121
	Commercial Agitation.....	123
	Liquor Licensing and Hotel Economics.....	124
6	ACCESS AND INTERNAL TRANSPORT.....	131
	The 'Cult of the Car'—A Roads Lobby Develops.....	131
	Roads Funding.....	134
	Regional.....	135
	State Perspective—The West Coast Road.....	136
	Railways.....	140
	Services, Comforts and Fares.....	141
	Fighting Fire with Fire.....	145
	TGTD Attitude to Road Transport.....	146
	Advertising Railway Tours.....	148
	Package Holidays.....	149
	New Railways, New Excursions.....	150
	Parochial Grievances.....	151
	Tourist contribution to TGR finances.....	152
7	REVIVING LOCALISM—BACK TO TASMANIA, 1922.....	157
	Parochial Grievance Revived.....	157
	Adapting an Idea.....	161
	The Tasmanian Response.....	163
	A Civic Boost.....	169
	The Festivities.....	172
	TGTD Popularity Tested.....	173
	A Success?.....	175
	PART THREE—RETRENCHMENT AND RESURGENCE.....	181
8	'A MOST RETROGRADE STEP'—TGTD RETRENCHMENT.....	183
	A Political Lynching.....	183
	The Inquisitors.....	184
	The Proceedings.....	186
	Report Released and Smith's Reply.....	189
	Lee's Response—Smith Sacked.....	190
	A New Government—Further Cuts and Emmett's Demotion.....	193
	The Decision, and Public Reaction.....	196
	Another Enquiry.....	199
	Mainland Bureaux 'Expansion'.....	202

The New Commissioner.....	204
Bureau Functions Again Reviewed.....	207
Thomas Cook's Offer.....	208
State Tourist Advisory Board.....	210
9 GRASS ROOTS RESURGENCE-CIVICS AND THE SEARCH FOR CONFIDENCE.....	213
Internal Stimuli—Economics and Politics.....	214
Commonwealth Protection, 'this triple-headed Vampire'.....	216
Empire Revivalism.....	218
Viceroys & Legates—Ambassadorial Reciprocity.....	222
New World Empire—The Swing to America.....	230
Business and Professional Voluntarism	232
Chambers of Commerce.....	232
The University.....	234
Economic Society	236
Non-Party' Politics.....	237
Rotary.....	239
Women in Public Life.....	242
The Fourth Estate: Politics, Publicity and Advertising.....	244
Combating Pessimism—Boosting Tasmanian Identity	247
10 A CONDITIONING PROCESS.....	249
Community Boosting—Advertising and Improvements.....	249
The Navigation Act.....	265
11 TASMANIA'S BIG BOOST	276
A Call to Arms.....	277
The Power of Pessimism	288
Triumph of the Boosters	291
A Better Outlook for Tasmania	303
PART FOUR—A SETTLED POLICY	305
12 A NATIONAL INDUSTRY	306
CONCLUSION—WHO WERE THE BOOSTERS?.....	322
APPENDICES	325
APPENDIX ONE — TABLES AND GRAPHS.....	326
APPENDIX TWO — AN UNDERSECRETARY'S SPHERE.....	330
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES.....	334
Press, Ephemeral and other Archival Sources.....	334
Contemporary Printed Works.....	334
Official Published Reports.....	340
Later Works.....	342
ABBREVIATIONS	351
NAMEINDEX	354

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations used in this thesis come primarily from Milford McArthur (ed) *Prominent Tasmanians* (Hobart: GJ Boyle; 1924) and the pages of *The Mercury*, Hobart, and some tourist ephemera produced by the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau. It has not been considered necessary to list them in detail here as in most cases they relate directly to accompanying text. In the few cases where they do not so relate, they are included for the enjoyment of the reader and do not require reference. However special mention should be made here to the map of Tasmania, facing page thirteen.

The author is happy to provide any other details should they be required.

Most of the illustrations have been prepared from originals with computer technology operated by Warwick Harris of Leo Productions.