

the conveyance of their produce, and he thought that a tax of the nature he had indicated would be a most legitimate source of revenue towards providing that desideratum. It was not necessary that he should now refer to those portions of His Excellency's Speech which dwelt with the question of public works. The subject had already been referred to by the hon. member for Wellington, in glowing terms, which, no doubt, would be duly appreciated in the right quarter. The other subjects referred to in the speech were matters that must necessarily occupy the consideration of the House in the course of the Session, and he would therefore refrain from commenting upon them on the present occasion, contenting himself by expressing his general approval of the policy sketched out in the vice-regal address. In conclusion, he might be allowed to express the gratification he felt at seeing their hon. friend the Speaker again presiding over their deliberations; and, if he might be permitted, in such connection, to use an expression which was somewhat commonplace if not irreverent, he would be disposed to apostrophise him in the phraseology of a somewhat hackneyed Oriental compliment—"May your shadow never grow less!"

On the motion of Mr. STEERE, the debate was then adjourned until Wednesday.

The House adjourned at half-past four o'clock, p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Wednesday, 21st July, 1880.

Shipwrecked Colonial Seamen Bill: first reading—Destructive Insects and Substances Bill: first reading—Police Ordinance, 1861, Amendment Bill: first reading—Public Officers Act, 1879, Amendment Bill: first reading—Jury Act, 1871, Amendment Bill: first reading—District Roads Act, 1871, Amendment Bill: first reading—Closure of Street in Pinjarrah Bill: first reading—Sandalwood Bill: first reading—Appointment of Chairman of Committees—Census Bill: second reading; in committee—Address in Reply to Governor's Speech—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at seven o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

FIRST READINGS.

The following Bills, introduced by members of the Government, were read a first time: A Bill to provide for the relief and return to Western Australia of Shipwrecked Colonial Seamen; a Bill for preventing the introduction and spreading of Insects, or of Matter destructive to Vegetation; a Bill to amend "The Police Ordinance, 1861"; a Bill to amend certain portions of "The Public Officers Act, 1879" (43 Vic., No. 1); a Bill to amend "The Jury Act, 1871"; a Bill to amend "The District Roads Act, 1871"; a Bill to provide for the Closure of portion of a certain Street in the townsite of Pinjarrah; a Bill to prevent the Destruction and Export of immature Sandalwood.

CENSUS BILL.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. T. Goldsworthy) moved the second reading of a Bill to perpetuate an Ordinance intituled "An Ordinance for taking 'an account of the Population, and of 'the amount of live Stock and Crop, and 'other Particulars of the Colony of 'Western Australia.'" The reason why the Bill was brought forward was because it was the opinion of the legal advisers of the Government that the Ordinance in question (12th Vic. No. 4) was inoperative, and as the Census would be taken next year, it was necessary to enact that the powers and authorities given by the said Ordinance should then be exercised and discharged. The motion for the second reading was agreed to without discussion.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. T. Goldsworthy): Before the Bill which has just been read a second time can be advanced another stage, it will be necessary for the House to elect a Chairman of Committees. I beg to propose the name of Sir Thomas Cockburn-Campbell for that office. The hon. gentleman has acted in a similar capacity during a previous Council, and is in every respect well qualified to discharge the duties appertaining to the position.

MR. STEERE, in seconding the proposition, said that he believed the former

experience of the hon. gentleman nominated, and his consequent acquaintance with the prescribed forms, would render him acceptable to the members of that House as Chairman.

No other nomination being made,
SIR T. COCKBURN-CAMPBELL rose in his place and acknowledged the compliment.

CENSUS BILL.

The House then went into Committee on this Bill, and agreed to its various clauses *sub silentio*.

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO GOVERNOR'S SPEECH—ADJOURNED DEBATE.

THE SPEAKER informed the House that he held a copy of the proposed Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech, and requested the Clerk to read the same, as follows:

"To His Excellency Sir William Cleaver
"Francis Robinson, Knight Commander
"of the Most Distinguished Order of
"Saint Michael and Saint George,
"Governor and Commander-in-Chief in
"and over the Territory of Western
"Australia and its Dependencies, &c.,
" &c., &c.

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

"This being the first occasion on which the Council has had the opportunity of offering its congratulations on Your Excellency's return to the Colony, it gladly avails itself of it to assure you that this Council will at all times be most ready and anxious to co-operate with Your Excellency in bringing about that advancement of the Colony which alone can be assured by the cordial co-operation, as heretofore, between the Executive and the Representatives of the people.

"We regret to find that the Financial Condition of the Colony is not such as the Council had reason, from Papers laid before it prior to its dissolution, to hope for; but Your Excellency's suggestions on this most important matter shall receive our most careful consideration.

"We are gratified to find that the necessity for introducing fresh labor into the Colony has received Your

Excellency's attention, and that a sum has been placed on the Estimates for that purpose.

"The question of the maintenance of Main and Minor Roads, for which provision has been made on the Estimates, shall receive our best attention.

"The desirability of the continuance of Steam Communication is undeniable, and we trust that its extension to the North-West may be secured, now that so much new country will shortly be opened up, as is apparent from Your Excellency's remarks on Mr. Alexander Forrest's recent valuable exploration.

"The proposed increase to the staff of the Audit Department will, when the Estimates are submitted, have due consideration.

"We trust that the representation of this Colony at the Melbourne Exhibition may be as successful as is anticipated by Your Excellency; and we feel assured that no pains will be spared by the Surveyor General and the gentlemen forming the committee to render it, as far as lies in their power, a success.

"The Council cannot but regret the contemplated disbandment of the Pensioner Force, and will await with interest Your Excellency's further communication on this subject.

"Whilst thanking Your Excellency for the valuable Reports emanating from the various Departments which have been laid upon the Table, we can only assure Your Excellency that one and all will be carefully considered, as the importance of the interests involved necessarily demands.

"We are gratified to hear that the first section of the Eastern Railway will so shortly be completed, and we trust that Your Excellency will do all in your power to procure the extension of railway communication.

"The Bills that Your Excellency may submit shall receive our most thoughtful consideration; and we may here add that the Council is glad to find that amongst other measures Your Excellency purposes introducing a Bill to simplify the mode of procedure at present existing in the Supreme Court of this Colony.

"It only remains for us to assure Your Excellency that we heartily echo the words in the concluding paragraph of

"your speech—That under God's blessing our deliberations may conduce to the best interests of the Colony, and that we may be guided in all things to wise and impartial conclusions."

MR. STEERE: Sir,—I entirely agree in the expression made use of in the address that the members of this House should cordially co-operate with the Government in carrying out such measures as are, in their opinion, calculated to advance the interests of the Colony; because I am quite certain it is only by the existence of such cordial relations between Her Majesty's Representative on the one hand, and the representatives of the people on the other, that we can effect any good. I also quite sympathise with the feeling of regret expressed by His Excellency the Governor in resuming the administration of the Colony at a time of considerable financial embarrassment; and I am sure that every hon. member will share the same feeling of regret, for indeed it was a melancholy statement of our finances that was made to us by His Excellency the other day. I do not pretend to have thoroughly mastered that statement at present, and I doubt whether any other member has done so. The preparation of the returns on which it is based admittedly occupied a considerable time, and it cannot be expected that the members of this House have already sufficiently grasped such a statement as to enable them to enter upon a critical analysis of the figures furnished, as they would wish to do. I may, however, say that I was somewhat surprised, on the announcement being made as to the great deficit existing, that there was no scheme placed before us—no scheme, at any rate, that I think would be acceptable—for meeting this deficit. The first thought that suggests itself to most people, upon finding their expenditure exceeding their income, is—retrenchment. They cast about to see in what direction their expenditure may be reduced. But, according to the announcement made by His Excellency in his speech to this House, it appears there is no intention on the part of the Government to make any reduction whatever in the public expenditure; but a proposition is made which I think is a very impolitic one, namely, that we should pay off the deficit

out of a gradually accruing revenue, during the next two or three years. I cannot imagine a proceeding more injurious to the interests of the Colony, calculated as it is to put an immediate stop to all public works of importance. The result will be, not that the country will remain at a standstill—for no country can so remain, it must either advance or retrograde—the result of adopting the course here recommended will be, that the Colony, instead of moving forward, and keeping pace with the times, will go backwards. I do not go so far as to say that His Excellency, occupying the position which he holds, could have followed any other course; at the same time I feel bound to say that it is a ruinous course—that we should seek to pay off this deficit by means of a gradually accruing revenue, while in the meantime we shall have to borrow from the banks, who will charge us eight per cent. on all overdrafts. Such an arrangement would, it appears to me, never answer our purpose, and I think a wiser course to pursue would be to raise this money by means of a loan to carry out public works already in progress, and others which are needed. To do this, we must either increase our taxation, or reduce our expenditure to such an extent that there will be a sufficient surplus revenue to pay the interest. I think that, of those two courses, that which will suggest itself for our adoption will be the latter—that we should curtail our expenditure rather than have resort to additional taxation. There is only one source of fresh taxation that commends itself to my mind, and that is a stamp duty, similar to the proposal made by the Government last year, but rejected by this House. It has been stated that such a tax would be very obnoxious, and also that it would produce, comparatively, but a very small revenue. No doubt the taxes would be obnoxious—all taxes are so; at all events, I have never heard of a tax that was not obnoxious. I do not suppose that at first it would yield much revenue, but year by year it would go on increasing, and would be the foundation of a very legitimate and ultimately very productive tax, and its incidence would fall upon the very classes best able to bear the burden. As to the financial statement placed before us in the

Governor's speech, I can only say that, if that statement is a correct one, the quarterly returns of revenue and expenditure published from time to time in the *Government Gazette*, and which certainly ought to be regarded as reliable, are entirely fallacious, for they do not agree in the least with this statement. According to the *Gazette* returns, the deficiency in the revenue at the end of last year was between £48,000 and £49,000, and as the returns for the first quarter of this year (only recently published) show that the revenue for that quarter exceeded the expenditure by £10,000, one would imagine that ought to have reduced the deficit at the end of March last to something between £38,000 and £39,000; instead of which we are now told it is £80,000. Therefore, if this statement is correct, the other official returns, as published in the *Government Gazette*, are utterly fallacious and consequently unreliable. I do not myself think that our financial position is quite so bad as it appears by the statement made by His Excellency, because there are so-called liabilities which I myself certainly cannot consider as such at all. There is, for instance, an item of £7,000 for interest and sinking fund on loans, figuring among the liabilities of the Colony at the end of last year. That amount did not become due until the 1st January, 1880, and it was provided for in the Estimates for that year, and therefore I cannot for the life of me consider this item as an outstanding liability. We might as well look upon the salaries of public officers for the year, likewise provided for in the Estimates, as so many liabilities. There is another item which it appears to me has no right to figure under the head of liabilities, and that is the item of £4,082—the difference between par and proceeds of the loan for 1878. I cannot understand how that can be regarded as a liability. I may not be correct in the view which I take of it, but I certainly cannot look upon it in that light, for it is money that has never been spent, nor will it be, for we never had it to spend. And even if it were a liability, it might very easily be provided for by an amended Act, making it repayable from the loan itself; for there was an amount of £10,000 provided for in that loan for

certain public works, including cost of a steam tug, which was never obtained. Provision was, however, made for it in the loan, in the expectation that the mail steamers might be induced to call at Fremantle. All hope of that is gone for the present, and perhaps for ever; and I think this amount might be paid off. No doubt it will be a very serious matter for this House to determine what is to be done to extricate the Colony from its financial embarrassment. Whether the extent of our embarrassment is as great as it has been stated to be, or not, we certainly find ourselves in a very awkward dilemma, and it will be a very serious matter for this Council to decide how we are to overcome our difficulties. For myself, as an individual member, I feel a very great responsibility in the matter, and I am sure every other member does the same, for on our decision will probably rest the future welfare of the Colony, during the next few years. I will say no more at present with regard to this matter. As to the paragraph dealing with the expenditure of the Road Loan, I can only say that, in my opinion, the manner in which His Excellency proposes to expend it, is, under all the circumstances, the best that could be devised, the intention being to spread the expenditure of the money over a certain number of years, so as to relieve the revenue from the annual drain upon it by reason of the grants made for the up-keep of roads in general. I do not mean to say that it would not have been better if the expenditure of this money had been entrusted to the various District Roads Boards, for probably those bodies would have been, by reason of their local knowledge and experience, best able to have expended it judiciously and economically. But His Excellency having come to the conclusion that, according to the terms upon which the loan was sanctioned, the money cannot be spent except under the control of a Government committee, we must of course bow to his decision, as there is no other way we can get at the money at all. I think, however, it will be a matter for the consideration of this Council whether the amount placed on the Estimates for the up-keep of minor roads should be spent in the way contemplated. I think, considering the embarrassed

circumstances of the Colony, the people should be expected to make some sacrifice, in the interest of the public weal; and it is a question in my mind whether, for the up-keep of these minor roads, the district boards entrusted with their control should not bring into operation those provisions of the Act which empower them to levy a local rate for the maintenance of their roads. With reference to the question of Steam Communication, my views on that subject are so well known that there is no necessity for me to dwell upon them here. I have publicly stated on more than one occasion that I am opposed to subsidising, at the public expense, any service further eastward than Albany, as we now have the advantage of regular fortnightly communication between the other Colonies and our own, by means of the P. & O. Co.'s steamers; and I fail to see the necessity for subsidising a steamer of our own to run in opposition to these fine boats. I think we might make a reduction in our expenditure in this direction, and then establish steam communication with our own North-West Settlements, which would be of far greater service to the Colony. I am sure all hon. members must have been glad to hear that His Excellency had already forwarded to the Secretary of State, for his approval, the new regulations prepared for the disposal of the country recently explored by Mr. A. Forrest at the North. It was with very great regret that the members of the Commission who framed those regulations found that they could not be brought into operation at once, for any delay in bringing them into force means so much delay in the settlement of the country. As it is, we shall have to wait the Secretary of State's approval of the Regulations; and I do so with some anxiety, which I think will be shared by all other hon. members. With respect to the paragraph in the Governor's speech relating to the disbandment of the Pensioner Force, I will only say at present that I await with some considerable degree of interest the announcement of the arrangements which His Excellency proposes to make for the expenditure of the sum of £4,000 a year which the Imperial Government has promised to contribute towards providing for the

objects hitherto fulfilled by the pensioner force. I can only express a hope that this Council, before it separates, will be afforded an opportunity of expressing an opinion upon the scheme. I should be sorry to see a permanent establishment created in consideration of this contribution from the Imperial Government, which it will be observed will only be paid up to the year 1887; so that, in the event of the establishment of any permanent force for the object in view, the Colony would, after that year, have to bear all the expenses of maintaining such a force. I therefore hope that whatever arrangements may be made will be of a temporary character. There is one other subject dwelt upon in His Excellency's speech which I wish to refer to, because it has formed a prominent topic, annually, in almost every vice-regal utterance since Governor Robinson's previous administration. I allude to what I may call the sanitary clause of the speech, in which great stress, as usual of late, is placed upon the alleged insalubrious state of some of the towns of the Colony, and with special reference to the city of Perth. I must say that, so far as my opinion goes, I think it is a libel upon the people of the Colony, that this subject should be brought forward as it is, and that such prominence should be given to it, year after year, in the Governor's speeches. People outside the Colony must really be under the impression that we are living in a most filthy place, that all sanitary precautions are neglected, and that consequently the rate of mortality is something excessive. We all know that doctors are very often alarmists; and although I do not mean to say that Dr. Waylen, the Colonial Surgeon, or the other medical officers who have made these reports, are not correct in their views, and that there is not some danger from sewage contamination, still I must say that I do not think there is any occasion for all this fuss being made about the matter every Session of Council. What are the real facts of the case? Why, that Western Australia, so far from being what outsiders might imagine it to be, from these reports—a most insalubrious place of residence—is in reality one of the healthiest places in the wide world. Our rate of mortality is very considerably less than in most

other countries. Whereas in England it is 22 per 1000, here it is only 14 per 1000—a lower rate than that recently given, in a return issued by the Registrar General in London, showing the rate of mortality in twenty of the principal towns in Europe, India, and America. Then, with regard to what are designated zymotic diseases—a class of diseases arising chiefly from sewage contamination and unwholesome atmosphere—the rate of mortality from these diseases is not greater here than it is in the most healthy towns in England. All this, I think, must convince us that a great deal too much has been said about the insanitary condition of Perth, and of other towns in this Colony. At any rate, I think the Government ought to be the very last to give prominence to this subject, considering that, according to the report of the Inspector of Nuisances at Perth, the only really serious nuisance which that officer, and which the residents in the neighbourhood complain of and have complained of for years past, is a nuisance caused by the sewage flowing from a Government establishment. I therefore hope, as this subject of the sanitary condition of Perth has been annually trotted out, by successive Governors, for some years past, it will not figure in the vice-regal Speech again next Session—seeing that, judging by results, we have every reason to be proud of our climate, and of our sanitary surroundings. I notice from His Excellency's Speech that the Director of Public Works states that the Northern Railway has been successfully worked, but that from a financial point of view it cannot be regarded as satisfactory—in other words, the line did not pay its working expenses during the past year; but the Director expresses the hope, or rather “confidently anticipates,” that the receipts during the next twelve months will fully cover the expenditure. I must say, for my own part, I am not so sanguine as the Director on this point. I find from his official report, laid on the Table on Monday, that the working expenses of the line during the past year exceeded the receipts by about £1000, and, judging from the return of revenue and expenditure for the first six months of the present year, the result at the end of the year will be equally unsatisfactory.

I think it is a matter for consideration whether some other arrangement, whereby this railway might be worked by contract, could not be arrived at. I believe there are people in the district who are prepared to rent the line, and I think the question is well worthy of consideration. At all events, I do not think the public will care to maintain a line of railway that does not actually pay its own working expenses, to say nothing of interest on the money expended in its construction. Reverting to our financial position, and the best means of extricating ourselves from it, there was one question touched upon by the hon. member who seconded the motion for an address in reply (Mr. Randell) which I would like to refer to. The hon. member, referring to the incidence of taxation, stated that, in his opinion, poor people here were taxed, proportionately, much heavier than the rich. Now, in the first place, I want to know who these “poor people” are. I do not think there are amongst us, in this Colony, any “poor people,” in the sense in which the expression is understood at home. If by it is meant the laboring classes, all I can say is, that mechanics and artisans, and the working classes generally, are much better off here than the same class of people are at home, or even the class above them, in the same station in life. And even if we had “poor people” here, I do not think it can be fairly said that they are taxed, in proportion to their means, any heavier than the wealthier classes of the community. The only taxation in this Colony is taxation through the Customs; we have no other tax, properly so designated. And that being the case, it must be apparent that the richer class of people, who of course consume a greater quantity of dutiable articles than the poorer classes, contribute quite as much, proportionately, to the revenue. I do not think, either, that taxation, as I have seen it mentioned in some of the local papers, is heavier here, in proportion to the population, than it is in the other Colonies. Another thing, which is altogether lost sight of, in considering this question, is the fact that we have scarcely any purely local taxation. In England, the population are taxed under this head, to the extent of £1 per head per annum. Such a tax in

Perth would bring a very handsome revenue indeed—about £6,000 a year—to the Municipal Council. But apart from the absence of local taxation, I maintain that, comparatively speaking, the general taxation for the purposes of Government is certainly nothing like so great here as it is in the other Australian Colonies, while our indebtedness per head of the population is very small indeed compared with that of our neighbours. I was rather surprised to find that amongst all the subjects touched upon in His Excellency's Speech no reference was made to the present satisfactory condition of most of the staple industries of the Colony. We have passed through an exceptionally prosperous season, and very satisfactory prices have been realised for most of our products. Sandalwood has been exported largely, and at very remunerative prices; our wool has realised a much higher price than it did last year, which must beneficially affect our sheep-farmers and agriculturists. Our timber trade is being largely developed; and pearl-shells, which have been sent home in large quantities, have realised good prices. Altogether, I think the future promises well. Our prospects are certainly brighter in this respect than they have been for some years past, and I think we may be thankful that such is the case, and that, although we may feel some little embarrassment in consequence of our financial difficulties, I think we have every reason to look forward with confidence and some degree of hopefulness to the future.

No other member rising, the question—That an address in reply to His Excellency's Speech be presented—was put and carried.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. T. Goldsworthy) moved that the following members be chosen as a special Committee to consider and report upon the Address: Messrs. Venn, Randell, S. H. Parker, Steere, Brown, Marmion, and the mover.

Agreed to.

The Committee, having retired for a few minutes, returned and reported that they had agreed to the Address without amendment.

The Report of the Committee was then adopted, and it was ordered that the

Address should be presented to His Excellency next day.

The House adjourned at a quarter past eight o'clock.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Thursday, 22nd July, 1880.

Transfer of Imperial Convict Establishment to the Colony—Audit Bill: first reading—Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at noon.

PRAYERS.

TRANSFER OF IMPERIAL CONVICT ESTABLISHMENT TO THE COLONY.

MR. STEERE, in accordance with notice, moved, "That an Humble Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, praying that he will be pleased to direct to be laid upon the Table of the Council a copy of all correspondence which has taken place during the years 1875-76-77-78-79 and 80, between the Imperial Government and the Government of this Colony, with reference to the transfer to the Colony of the control and management of the Imperial Convict Establishment at Fremantle." The hon. member said the question referred to was one that very materially concerned the interest of the Colony, and he could not conceive that His Excellency would have any hesitation in furnishing the correspondence asked for. He might say that, when in England recently, in the course of an interview with the Secretary of State, he mentioned the subject to that functionary, and he perfectly agreed with him that the Council should be informed of the correspondence that had taken place between the two Governments on the subject, and, in fact,