

the decision of the Government in the matter.

EXPENDITURE ON FREMANTLE WATER WORKS.

MR. PEARSE moved that a return be laid on the table, showing the amount of money that had been expended on the Fremantle Water Supply Works on labor and material, and the amount of the available balance.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at eight o'clock, p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 11th April, 1889.

Roads Act Amendment Bill: third reading—Defence of Fremantle: adjourned debate—Enlargement of Council Chamber—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at noon.

PRAYERS.

ROADS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

DEFENCE OF FREMANTLE: MESSAGE (No. 3).

ADJOURNED DEBATE.

On the order of the day for the resumption of this debate,

MR. SHOLL said: I consider it undesirable at the present time to take any action in this matter of erecting these guns until we have the benefit of some scientific opinion as to a proper and well-defined scheme of defence for Fremantle. I think it is very desirable to have the port of Fremantle defended, and properly defended; but I think it a pity to fritter away money in erecting these guns on any particular spot until we know that is the best spot for placing

them, in view of extending these defence works at some future date; also as to whether these guns are powerful enough for the purpose they are wanted. I think that the class of vessels that are likely to visit Fremantle would carry much heavier guns than these, and, in that case, our forts would not be of much use to us. In fact, they would be more likely to do more harm than good, for they would simply irritate an enemy, and very likely lead to the bombardment of the town. I think everyone recognises that Fremantle ought to be protected, but the point is this, whether it would not be better for us to wait and have a scientific officer acquainted with fortification to tell us exactly what is required before we begin to potter with these defence works. The present position of the colony is not one in which we would be justified in incurring any useless expenditure,—which in my opinion this expenditure would be. Probably, in a few years, the work now proposed to be done would have to be undone, to make way for other and more extensive works. For this reason I intend to vote against it.

MR. PARKER: I don't know that there would be anything gained by further postponing this question. We have before us, I think, all the information we are likely to gain, at any rate until we have this professional advice that hon. members wish to obtain. I do not know whether members are aware of the expense or the cost to the colony this visit from a skilled officer of engineers is likely to be; it appears to me that it would be something very considerable; and that if we call in the services of an engineer well qualified to advise us on our fortifications, we may find that his ideas are like some other opinions we have had, somewhat beyond our means to carry them out. It is suggested now that we should put up these two guns, which are very good guns according to Colonel Phillimore, who says they are the best kind of muzzle-loading guns that we could have, unless we went to very great expense indeed. I cannot help thinking, myself, that in case of war, we would not be likely to be visited by any very large vessels, heavily armed; for in the first place, Fremantle is not the safest of harbors to approach or to anchor in; and, in the second place, it

would be hardly worth the while of a first-class vessel of war to come there. Therefore the probability is that any hostile craft that would approach would be a light cruiser, with the idea of levying contribution upon the town. If so, I cannot but think, in the face of the information given to us by Colonel Phillimore, and others, that these two guns would afford complete protection to Fremantle against such a vessel, with the two Maxim guns. We know that a ship of war a long distance from a port of refuge would not voluntarily run into danger; she would not risk a shot that might disable her. We know that Fremantle is a long way from where an enemy's base of operations would be; and it is not at all likely that a first-class man-of-war would risk to come such a distance from the base of operations. So that the only type of vessel we would have to guard against would be a vessel of the light cruiser type; and such guns as we are offered and are recommended to get would apparently be sufficient protection to deter such vessels from coming into our harbor. I think that the mere fact of the erection of these forts would be a sufficient protection to us, without the necessity of bringing them into operation at all. The mere knowledge on the part of the enemy that we had these guns in position would deter him from venturing within their range, at such a distance from the base of his operations, with the chance of being disabled. Looking at the plans that have been laid on the table, it does not appear to be a very difficult thing, nor one requiring the exercise of much engineering skill, to determine the best position for these guns; all it requires is the exercise of common sense. We can all see that the object in view must be to place them in such a way that they will command the whole of the approaches into the harbor; and it appears from the plans that this object may be gained by placing the guns where it is suggested they should be placed. I cannot, myself, see what more is required. The next thing would be to construct a fort that would afford protection to the men working these guns, and which would also be sufficiently strong to withstand any stray shots from the enemy's vessel. I have no doubt, myself, that although Colonel Phillimore is modest enough to say that

it would be desirable to have an expert to advise us on this point, I have no doubt, myself, that Colonel Phillimore is quite capable, with his professional education and experience, to build this fort, and to build it in such a way that it would afford sufficient protection for all purposes it is likely to be required for in connection with the proposed armament. We must bear in mind that these guns are offered by the Imperial Government as a gift to us; and, apparently, if we do not accept the gift now, we may not have a chance of obtaining these guns hereafter. Their value, I think, is estimated by Colonel Phillimore at £1,500 apiece, or £3,000 for the two. It is not a gift that this colony, I think, can afford to reject entirely. We are asked to provide £4,066 for the erection of a fort, and £500 a year for its upkeep by a Volunteer corps. As to this last item I think this £500 a year might fairly come out of the present Volunteer grant; so that there would really be no extra expense for the maintenance of this battery. I think that an offer of £3,000 worth of guns on condition that we erect a fort at the cost of £4,000 is not a bad offer, especially when, in all probability, the mere erection of this fort, mounted with these guns, will be sufficient to deter an enemy from entering the harbor, without our having to use the guns at all. I feel, sir, that, looking at the matter in this light, I ought to support the original proposition of the Colonial Secretary. I trust members will bear in mind that a memorandum has been addressed by the Commandant to the Governor, and forwarded to the House. It appears to me that this memorandum has put a different complexion on the question entirely. At first I thought with the hon. member for Perth, who moved the amendment, that it would be inadvisable at present to embark on this expenditure; but after reading that memorandum and reconsidering the whole matter, I think we should be very unwise indeed if we refused this offer, and if we were to allow any further time to go by without placing these guns in position at Fremantle. Some members have referred to the fact that this question is one intimately associated with our future harbor works. I think it is generally admitted that these harbor works are likely to cost a very

large amount of money, and that the expense of removing this fort, should it be necessary to do so hereafter, will be a mere bagatelle compared with the immense cost of the harbor works; and I cannot agree that the problematical question of our future harbor works should be allowed to weigh against our accepting the present offer, and so placing the port of Fremantle in a state of defence. I do not think it would be wise on our part to let the substance go while we are grasping at a shadow.

MR. VENN: I am afraid that I cannot agree with the hon. member for Sussex, as to adopting this motion; for I can foresee, or, at least, I think I can foresee a very considerable amount of expense and a very inconsiderable amount of good from it. We are told that in his opinion—and of course the hon. member's opinion is as good as any other member's opinion, and no more, not being a scientific man—he says that in his opinion the mere setting up of these guns would have the same effect as if we had a strong fortification. But, surely, the hon. member must be aware that in these days an enemy would have every information as to the strength of the defences of every place that he intends to attack; and no enemy would be likely to send a cruiser within range of these guns unless he had a more powerful armament, and could give more than he received. Under any circumstance it appears to me that the whole gist of the hon. member's argument is this: that because we are offered something and that something is worth a little money, we should not refuse it but accept it, and thereby saddle the colony (as I think) with a very considerable amount of expenditure. Members must know that if we accept these guns, such as they are—and we have not heard a great deal about them, and what we have heard is not very favorable perhaps—but if we do accept them, and they are sent, we shall find that we shall have a very considerable amount of other expenditure to provide for. At present we are about to enter upon a new form of Government, and our expenses are already looming out, and I can foresee in the not very distant future some very considerable charges to be met out of the revenues of the colony. I fancy the expenses we are now asked to sanction are rather premature; and will

be saddling the new Government with a legacy which it will not thank us for, and which it may not be able to keep up. No doubt it is very advisable to fortify the principal port of the colony if we are in a position to do so and do it properly and effectually. But I do not think for one moment—and, like him, I am only guided by common sense, which is all we have to guide us—I do not think for one moment that the mere fact of our having these two guns (absolutely two guns) would ever serve as an effectual defence for Fremantle against any cruiser that may come in there for a hostile purpose. The idea of these two guns keeping away an enemy does appear absurd. If the Home Government should withdraw their gift, all we can do is to express our regret that we are not in a position to accept it with the conditions attached at the present moment. If our finances had been in a more flourishing state, and we were fairly launched into Responsible Government as a going concern, I should have been among the very first to consider any well-defined scheme of defence for the protection not only of Fremantle but of all the principal ports of the colony. But at the present time, and under present circumstances, I think it is premature.

MR. DE HAMEL: I cannot agree with the hon. member for Sussex in advising the colony at the present moment to go into this expenditure. I agree with the hon. member who has just sat down—that at the present time we have a sufficient tax upon our prospective resources without going into anything further. We are told that this is a gift that is offered to us; but even a gift may be clogged with such conditions as to make it a dear gift. The hon. member for Sussex suggests that the £500 a year required for the maintenance of this battery might be deducted from the present Volunteer vote. If this House were to accept that principle I think this House would be making a great mistake. I should be sorry to see the Volunteer grant encroached upon in any such way. This sum of £4,000—which this battery is estimated to cost in the first instance—represents an annual charge of about £200 in interest upon the money; added to which there is the further charge of £500 for maintenance, making an an-

nual charge of £700, which in four years would amount to about the full value of these guns, and probably have enabled us to have guns of a better construction. Improvements in the manufacture of guns are constantly being made; and I think on the whole we would do wiser to wait until we have a well-defined scheme of defence, and we are in a position to undertake it.

MR. CONGDON: I shall support the resolution of the Colonial Secretary, as I look upon it as the outcome of the resolution passed by this House in 1885. These defence works must be commenced sooner or later, and at present we have a very favorable offer made to us by the Imperial authorities, which I think we would do well to avail ourselves of, and so initiate these defence works. I cannot vote for the amendment, which suggests that we should wait and obtain skilled advice, but which makes no provision for payment for that skilled advice,—which to me appears necessary if we are going to get it. Some four or five years ago, when this colony and the sister colonies were suffering in dread of a Russian invasion, I remember how the Press teemed with letters pointing out our defenceless position, and suggesting that no time should be lost in commencing defence works at the port of Fremantle. If the necessity existed for it then, I am quite sure it exists now; and I certainly think we should not be acting wisely in refusing the offer of these two guns. I am fully persuaded of that in my mind, and I shall certainly support the original resolution.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) thought the House should look at this question from an Imperial rather than from a local or even an Australian point of view. The colony should be prepared to take its share of its responsibilities as an integral part of the Empire, in the defence of the Empire, and not look at this scheme in a narrow parochial spirit. The mother country had shown its readiness to do her part, and only asked that the colony would recognise its own share of the responsibility. The hon. member for Wellington said that if Responsible Government were in full working order and the finances in a more satisfactory state he would have been quite prepared to have considered this

question. He was afraid the hon. member would have to wait a considerable time before he was able to exercise this latent but contingent patriotism. He appealed to the hon. member as a loyal subject of the Empire to let his patriotism have full play at the present moment, and not wait until Responsible Government is in full swing and a more convenient time, and the Treasury is in that plethoric state which would be satisfactory to the hon. member.

MR. RICHARDSON: When this question was first mooted I felt very much inclined to ridicule it as much as anything else; but I think if the thing is looked at carefully and in the light thrown upon it by the able report of Colonel Phillimore, we shall find that it is not a thing to be made fun of and played with. Very possibly the time may come—we only want a war scare—when we will look at this matter in a more serious light. I cannot forget that during the war scare of a few years ago there was a general feeling prevailing that if we only had our principal port defended we would be very willing to pay for it, and pay anything in reason. We are very apt to forget these feelings of alarm, in times of peace. It is much the same feeling as is set forth in the old couplet—

“When the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be;
When the devil got well, the devil a saint was he.”

I do not think the expense of this scheme would be so great as is imagined by some members. A sum of £500 is for the maintenance of a permanent force, but I think a great deal of that might be saved from the present expense of our Volunteer force, and the extra expense would be very trifling, while a good deal of this playing at soldiers now going on might be converted into solid useful work, and our defence force might be of some real value in time of danger. The mere fact of our having two guns mounted that could pierce 6-inch armor at 2000 yards would certainly be some protection; it would be a protection so far as it goes, for it means this: if we are totally undefended any miserable little cruiser with one gun could put the whole place in a state of alarm and levy contribution, whereas if we go to the expense of having these guns mounted we know the enemy

would certainly have to go to the expense of sending an efficient vessel to tackle us, and as has been said, an enemy would hesitate before sending a really valuable war vessel so far away from the base of his operations, with the chance of being disabled. There is another practical view of the question: it appears to me that if a hostile cruiser came and threatened Fremantle and put the place under contribution, the process would be this,—she would first ascertain the actual strength of our battery and the probable amount of specie we have in the banks (which could be easily done from the published returns), and the enemy would begin to levy contribution; the banks would say, "We won't give up our gold, let them shell away;" and then it is thrown upon the inhabitants of the place to say whether this gold should be given up, and if they decided upon doing so, the banks would naturally and fairly look to the inhabitants and the Legislature to make good their losses; so that in the end it would have to come out of our own pockets,—that is, the pockets of the general body of taxpayers. I think it would be a rather short-sighted policy on our part, for the sake of an outlay of a few hundreds in the way of fortification, to run the risk of such a contingency as that. It is almost a certainty that if England became involved in war we should find these cruisers going about levying contributions from all undefended places; and we all know that, in the present unsettled state of Europe, war may break out at any moment. There is another thing: we should only be following in the wake of our sister colonies in looking after our defences, and doing our share towards the general protection of our common country, by putting our own house in order. I really think the scheme is worthy of consideration, when it is now shown by this report of Colonel Phillimore that the expenditure would not be very great, the permanent expenditure; though the initial outlay would probably be £4,000 or £5,000, we have often spent £5,000 before now upon matters of much less importance. I look upon this as a sort of insurance fund against possible war losses. It is a wise policy in the end to insure; and all commercial people recognise the wisdom and the prudence of it.

The question is this: are we wise, because we are at peace now, in shutting our eyes to the possibility of war with all its attendant miseries and losses,—are we wise in declining this offer of assistance to have our principal port put in a protected state? I am rather inclined to alter my first opinion as to this matter; I rather ridiculed it at first, but I look upon it in a far more serious light now.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright): I think there must be some little misapprehension as to the probable cost of these works. I have gone through this estimate with Colonel Phillimore and the other officer who was associated with him in framing it, and I find that by utilising prison labor, which can be easily got at Fremantle, the expense of placing these guns in position could be reduced by about £2,000; so that the total outlay would not be more than about £2,000 or £2,100, for the whole amount of work required to be done. It is agreed on all hands that Fremantle will eventually have to be fortified; some members want to put it off until we can get an eminent skilled officer to advise us; others want to put it off until we get Responsible Government; others wish to wait until the Treasury is full; but all agree it is a work that ought to be undertaken some day. The only really valid reason I have heard in favor of any delay is that we ought to proceed on some well-defined lines, and have some general plan of defence. In that I most cordially agree; I think these guns should certainly be placed in a position where they may be utilised hereafter in connection with a general scheme of defence. But I don't think it is wise to look a gift horse in the mouth; and as we are all agreed as to the necessity for fortifying Fremantle, I think we would do wisely in accepting this gift, which, after all, means £3,000 worth of guns towards a general scheme of defence which we all hope to see carried out some day.

The amendment was then put and negatived, and the original resolution put and passed.

ENLARGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) moved that the report of

the select committee appointed to consider the alterations necessary to be made in the Council Chamber, in view of the introduction of Responsible Government, be adopted. It would be seen from their report that the committee had a number of plans placed before them by the Works Department, and that the plan they favored was that marked "B," which was the plan that the committee recommended to the favorable consideration of the House. This would provide the necessary accommodation for two Houses, an Upper and a Lower House. The additional buildings would be of a very plain description, architecturally, and the estimated cost was from £5,000 to £6,000. This estimate included furniture and fittings. The committee were informed by the Superintendent of Works that this would include £500 worth of furniture. Doubtlessly, in future we should require much larger buildings, but he thought it would be agreed that for the present the proposed additions would answer our immediate requirements. It was a matter entirely for members to decide what in their opinion was necessary. He did not take it for granted that immediate action would be taken in the matter, beyond that the Works Department would be asked to have the necessary designs prepared, and attach them to the plan already laid on the table. The question of construction must be a question for future consideration, and also the question of funds, as it was not proposed to ask the House this session to do any more than to authorise the necessary drawings to be prepared. At the same time he thought it would be well that the House should now express an opinion as to the design of the proposed alterations, and that was the object of bringing the report of the committee before the House.

MR. A. FORREST thought it would be better to postpone the consideration of the report until they had passed the Constitution Bill. The bill had been sent back to the House for amendment, and it might be that they would not want these new buildings for some years.

MR. PARKER said it was only in order that the plans of the necessary alterations might be prepared; it was not proposed to incur any expense in the work of construction.

MR. RICHARDSON saw no objection to the adoption of the report, as it did not commit them to any expenditure.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. J. Forrest) said he did not approve of the plans as at present prepared; they appeared to him perfectly ridiculous. The present chamber was not capable of accommodating the present number of members, and how it was proposed to make it do for a larger number under another Constitution was more than he could understand, if they were going to have any accommodation at all. He hoped that if any buildings were to be erected, better arrangements would be made for a refreshment room and kitchen. It appeared to him that the committee had certainly overlooked this matter.

SIR T. COCKBURN-CAMPBELL agreed with the Commissioner of Crown Lands as to the refreshment room, and if the Colonial Secretary would agree to add a few words to the resolution, he thought there could be no objection to it, as it only asked that the necessary plans should be prepared. He thought it was absolutely necessary that the Legislature under the new system should be decently housed, and that proper arrangements be made for carrying on the parliamentary business of the country. He thought a fairly decent Upper House might be arranged for, from what the Superintendent of Works told them—premises that might last us for a considerable number of years. But he thought the refreshment accommodation was not nearly sufficient. He moved to add the following words: "provided additional accommodation for the refreshment department be arranged for."

MR. MARMION said one weak point in connection with the proposal was that they were asked to sanction an erection that must at some time or other entail a large expenditure, and not a word was said as to where the funds were to come from. [Sir T. COCKBURN-CAMPBELL: We were told that there are funds available out of loan.] He had not been aware of that. They certainly ought to have some idea where the money was to come from.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the committee had had three plans placed before them, and

he believed the most costly one would have met with general approval, if we had the means; but the committee thought that the plan now recommended would suffice for present requirements. Of course the responsibility rested with the House, and the money would have to be provided; but where it was to come from was not for him at present to say. But he thought the House ought to indicate the extent of the accommodation they considered necessary; and he had no objection to the amendment at all. The Works Department knowing the feeling of the present House would be able to prepare their plans accordingly.

MR. SHOLL hoped it was understood that the plans were to be of a building that would not cost more than £6,000.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said that was the intention of the committee, and that the amount was to include furniture and fittings.

Resolution, as amended, put and passed.

The House adjourned at one o'clock, p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Friday, 12th April, 1889.

Report of the Select Committee on the Petition of Eliza Tracey—Constitution Bill: Message (No. 12)
—Message (No. 16): Defence of Fremantle—Importation of Vine cuttings from South Australia—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PETITION OF ELIZA TRACEY.

MR. RASON brought up the report of the select committee on the petition of

Eliza Tracey, and moved that it be received and read.

Agreed to.

MR. RASON moved that it be printed.

MR. PARKER said he had no desire to oppose the motion, but he believed the evidence was very voluminous, and would involve a large amount of printing; and, judging from the report of the committee and the conclusions arrived at, it was not much use printing all this evidence.

MR. RASON said there were other matters dealt with in the evidence which the committee did not like to take up the time of the House with in their report, but which would be of the greatest interest to those members who cared to read the evidence.

Motion agreed to.

MESSAGE (No. 16): DEFENCE OF FREMANTLE.

THE SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following Message from His Excellency the Governor:

"With reference to Address No. 10, of the 11th instant, respecting the Defences of Fremantle, the Governor proposes to inform the Right Honorable the Secretary of State that this Government has agreed to provide, and the Legislature to vote the funds required for the erection of a battery and for improved mountings for two 7-inch guns at Fremantle, for two Maxim guns, and for the necessary upkeep of the battery and instruction of the Volunteer Artillery who are to work it, as stated in the Governor's Message No. 3, of the 25th ultimo, and that the funds for the capital outlay specified will be appropriated as needed during 1889 and 1890; the cost of the battery to be reduced as far as possible by the employment of prison labor.

"The Governor hopes to be able to arrange, without any great expense, that an officer of the Royal Engineers shall visit Fremantle, to settle the site and details of construction of the Battery.

"Government House, 12th April, 1889."

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): Hon. members have heard the Message read. I only rise to say that that is the interpretation attached