

Expenditure" laid on the Table and distributed among hon. members, he would find the various excesses under this and other items fully detailed.

MR. STEERE said all the papers laid by the Government on the table of the House were open to the inspection of the Press: if the editors of newspapers did not make use of them, the public must blame the newspaper conductors if they were not satisfied with the fulness of the information placed before them. But surely hon. members' constituencies must repose that confidence in them that it should not be deemed necessary to furnish the public with every item of expenditure in detail; they must be satisfied that their representatives exercised every reasonable supervision over the expenditure of the public funds.

MR. BURT—referring to the passage money of the Commissioner of Land Titles and of the Registrar—said he was not aware that the House had ever voted the money. He saw nothing of it here, and he would like to know if it had ever been paid.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said it had been charged under the head of "Travelling Expenses of Officials" in the Estimates for 1875.

MR. BURT failed to see how it could be charged under that item. The gentlemen referred to had not travelled out here as officials of the local Government. In fact, they could not be regarded as "officials" until their arrival in the Colony and they had entered on the duties of their office. He thought it was a gross waste of money, in the first place, and, in the second place, very unfair, to delegate the appointment of officers for the colonial service to the Secretary of State, when the offices could be efficiently filled in the Colony, to say nothing of the further waste of money in the Colony being called upon to pay £100 for the passage money of persons appointed by the Secretary of State in England.

The House resumed, and the bill having been reported, its third reading was fixed for the 10th August.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 10th August, 1876.

Arrest of Debtors' Bill: second reading—Inquiries into Wrecks Ordinance, 1864, Extension Bill: second reading—Steam Communication with India.

ARREST OF DEBTORS BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, in moving the second reading of a Bill to further facilitate the arrest of debtors and certain other persons about to leave the Colony, said the alteration proposed to be made in the law was closely connected with a matter that was slightly touched upon the other evening, and that was the advisability of adopting some system by means of which immigrants leaving the Colony before the expiration of the period of their agreement should be compelled to repay the cost of their passage money. It was proposed to place such persons in the same position as others who were under an engagement to pay money to a creditor, and who were about to abscond out of the Colony without satisfying their creditor's claim. Another alteration proposed to be made was to amend the clause in the "Arrest of Absconding Debtors Act" (34 Vic. No. 27), which enacted that the professing creditor shall by affidavit satisfy the Resident Magistrate at or near any seaport that the person indebted was about to quit the Colony in some vessel "then in such port." It was now proposed to add the words "or expected shortly to arrive in such port." Personally, he might say, he did not see why a creditor should be obliged to specify by what ship or in what way a debtor was about to leave the Colony; and he saw no reason why the Bill in this respect should not be assimilated with the Act dealing with fraudulent debtors owing £50 and upwards. Under the provisions of that Act, where the creditor proved to the satisfaction of the Chief Justice that there was probable cause for believing that a debtor was about to leave the Colony unless he were apprehended, the Supreme Court had power to order such debtor to be arrested. It was not rendered incumbent upon the creditor to specify in what way the person indebted was about to quit the Colony. In the Bill now before the House, however, it had been considered advisable to

introduce a provision calling upon the professing creditor to satisfy the Resident Magistrate, or other justice, that the person indebted in, or under engagement to pay, a sum of money not less than £10 or more than £50, was about to quit the Colony in some vessel in port, or expected shortly to arrive in port. These were the alterations which the Bill before the House proposed to effect.

Motion for second reading agreed to.

IN COMMITTEE :

Clause 1.

MR. STEERE could not see why an indebted person should be allowed to leave the Colony if he owed £5 any more than he who owed £10. Five pounds might be more important to a poor creditor than £10 to the wealthy one. He would therefore move, as an amendment upon the original clause, that "£5" be substituted in lieu of "£10," as the minimum amount for which an absconding debtor might be arrested.

MR. RANDELL asked what the expression "near" any seaport meant. Would York, Northam, or Newcastle be regarded as being "near" a seaport?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL asked the hon. member to consult his own common sense on the point, whether any sensible person would say that any of the towns named was near a seaport.

MR. RANDELL: With all due deference to your possession of common sense, I should say that those towns were near a seaport, in comparison with other places which are more distant.

MR. BURT said that persons indebted, and persons under an engagement to pay, were provided for in the Bill before the committee; but there was another class of persons whom it might be found desirable and necessary to prevent their quitting the Colony. He alluded to persons against whom a man might have good cause of action. The fourth section of the Fraudulent Debtors Act (34 Vict., No. 21) provided for the arrest of such persons, if the professing creditor satisfied the Chief Justice that he had good cause of action, to the amount of £50 or upwards, against a person about to quit the Colony; and he (Mr. Burt) would like to see the same provision introduced into the present Bill, which dealt with a lesser amount than £50. He would, therefore, suggest that after the word

"Colony" in the 5th line in the second page of the Bill, the following words be inserted,—“or if any person shall by affidavit satisfy any such Resident Magistrate or other Justice that he has good cause of action against such person about to leave the Colony.” With respect to the words which provided that a professing creditor should satisfy the Magistrate that a creditor was about to quit the Colony “in some vessel then in such port, or expected shortly to arrive in such port,” he thought it would be dangerous to leave out those words altogether. But he did not think that a Magistrate would, under the circumstances, be justified in requiring the creditor to specify the name of the particular vessel in which he believed the absconding debtor was about to take his departure. Nor did he think it necessary that the port whence he proposed taking his departure should be specified. He thought it would be ample if the creditor satisfied the Magistrate that the person indebted was about to quit the Colony in some vessel then in a port of the Colony, or expected shortly to arrive in a port of the Colony; but not in any particular port.

MR. BROWN said, if they passed the Bill at all, they should endeavor to make it of the same value to the residents of country districts as to those residing at or near a seaport. He would, therefore, move, as an amendment, and with a view that the clause should embrace all the Colony, that the word “the,” in the second line, be struck out, and the word “any” substituted in lieu thereof; and that the words “at or near any seaport,” in the third line, be omitted. This would render the provisions of the Bill of general application. A man might owe money to another at York, and the creditor might be able to satisfy the Magistrate there that the person indebted was about to leave the Colony; but, under the provisions of the Bill as it now stood, the absconding debtor could not be arrested, because the professing creditor was not “at or near a seaport.” He would be obliged to follow the levanting debtor to the seaport where he was about to embark, and to do so would possibly involve an expenditure of more money than the debt was worth. He would therefore move the amendment, as already stated.

THE CHAIRMAN pointed out that there was another amendment before the committee—that of the hon. member for Wellington.

MR. STEERE: I withdraw my amendment for the present.

MR. BURT: Before we touch this Bill—a most important Bill, probably one of the most important that will be brought before us—I do think that we should have further opportunity of considering its provisions. It is possible we may be dealing with something that will turn round and sting us some day. If we strike out the words proposed to be omitted by the hon. member for Geraldton, it would enable a creditor at York, or in any part of the Colony, to go before a Magistrate with the view of satisfying him that somebody indebted to him at Fremantle, or Albany, or any other distant port, was about to leave the Colony, without showing that the vessel in which he was about to leave was in port or likely to arrive. There is such a thing as malice in this world, and, out of pure malice, a person might go before a magistrate and say he believed a debtor was about to quit the Colony, simply for the purpose of annoying and harrassing the person indebted. I am not quite sure whether I am in order in so doing, but I would ask to refer the Bill to a select committee, and, to that end, I now move that the Chairman report progress.

MR. BROWN could not see any occasion to refer the Bill to a select committee, and thought it might as well be discussed in committee of the whole House. No doubt it placed an immense deal of discretionary power in the hands of Resident Magistrates and Justices of the Peace, but in a Bill of this nature the granting of such discretionary power could not be avoided. He thought the House might trust that magistrates would fully satisfy themselves that there was some reasonable ground for believing that a debtor was really about to quit the Colony before they granted a warrant for his arrest. With regard to the amount of debt which would enable a creditor to obtain such a warrant, he thought that the sum of £50 fixed as the maximum in the clause before the committee had better be left out, and that no fixed maximum should be mentioned. He was quite in accord with the hon. member

Mr. Burt, that the provisions of the Bill should extend to persons showing they had a good cause of action against a defendant about to quit the Colony.

MR. BURGESS fully endorsed the sentiments of the hon. member for Geraldton, and said he would be glad to see the minimum amount reduced to £5, and the maximum of £50 decidedly struck out. He also thought the provisions of the Bill should be applicable to the whole Colony.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL hoped the motion for referring the Bill to a select committee would be withdrawn. If a question of this simple character was not to be considered in a committee of the whole House, he could not conceive what questions might not be referred to a select committee.

MR. BURT thought the best way, after all, would be to move that the Bill be further considered in committee that day six months. Really it was no Bill at all as it stood. Every hon. member who had spoken with regard to it appeared to have some amendment to propose, which would lead to interminable discussion; and the result would be, a pretty hash would be made of the Bill. In fact, the Government ought to withdraw the measure, and re-draft it; it would never be licked into shape in its present form. It appeared to him that the question it dealt with was a question of very serious importance indeed, and one that should receive very grave consideration before passing the Bill into law.

MR. CROWTHER'S objection to select committees was this;—after they did their work, the House, as a rule, had to go over the work again. The intention of the Government was to remedy what had been a crying evil in this Colony for many years. In Perth and Fremantle, the law as it at present existed might, quite possibly, be applicable enough; but in the district which he represented there was no redress for a creditor under the same circumstances. He had known of an instance in which a creditor, simply because he was unable to point out in what port the vessel lay in which the absconding debtor was about to take his departure, failing to obtain a warrant for his arrest. The intention of the present bill was to do away with such facilities for evading creditors.

MR. BURGESS thought that such remote districts as Roebourne should be thought of. Debts to a large amount were frequently contracted there, and every facility was afforded an absconding debtor to quit the Colony by vessels leaving for Singapore and elsewhere. It would be impossible to take steps to arrest them by an action in the Supreme Court; and he thought the provisions of the Bill under consideration should be made applicable to such cases.

MR. STEERE: I think the discussion which has already taken place in committee upon this Bill must serve to prove how inexpedient it is that we should progress so rapidly as we are doing with this measure. It was read a first time yesterday and a second time to-day, and now we have been asked to go—and have gone—into committee upon it. From the remarks which have fallen from hon. members, it is evident that they have not had time to consider the provisions of the Bill. It frequently happens, from our hurrying through measures like this, that they have to be re-committed on the third reading, for amendment. Last year this was done in many cases, and I hold it was entirely in consequence of the manner in which Bills were hurried through committee. As a general rule, we ought never to be asked to go into committee on a bill upon the same day as the second reading, especially when the measure involves any important principle. The only way I can see to get out of our present difficulty is to move that progress be reported, and leave asked for to sit again.

THE CHAIRMAN: That amendment has already been moved.

MR. STEERE: The amendment moved by the hon. member Mr. Burt was to report progress with a view to refer the Bill to a select committee. My object is different, and my motion is an amendment upon an amendment, namely, that progress be reported, so that hon. members may have more time to consider the Bill, so as to be able to deal with it in committee of the whole House.

MR. BURT said he was quite agreeable to the adoption of that course, and he would therefore withdraw his amendment.

Progress was then reported, and leave obtained to sit again.

INQUIRIES INTO WRECKS ORDINANCE, 1864.—EXTENSION BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said it had been found by experience that the tribunal created by "The Inquiries into Wrecks Ordinance, 1874," was not vested with sufficiently extensive powers to investigate charges of misconduct of marine officers. Under that Ordinance the local tribunal was empowered to deal with charges of incompetency or misconduct brought against the masters or mates of vessels, when the alleged incompetency or misconduct had resulted in loss of life, or in the vessel being lost or abandoned, or sustaining any material damage. But cases had arisen, in which it had been found expedient that inquiries should be held with respect to incompetency and misconduct where the result had not been so disastrous as the loss of life or the abandonment of a vessel. Two such cases had occurred recently. One was that of the *Cleopatra* which struck the Abrolhos. When the inquiry was opened the captain's attorney took a preliminary objection, contending that the court had no jurisdiction, inasmuch as no material damage had been done to the ship; that the ship was not lost; and that no life was sacrificed; and that therefore the tribunal was not capable of trying the master. Another case was that of the *Ivy*, which had arrived in the Colony a few weeks ago from England. The captain died on the voyage, and the first mate took the command of the vessel, and, he (The Attorney General) believed, that from the time he assumed the command until the arrival of the ship at Fremantle he boxed himself in his cabin, and instead of looking after the ship indulged in practices which he (The Attorney General) thought that House would condemn—he took more refreshment, perhaps, than a captain of a ship should, under such circumstances, have taken. When he arrived at Fremantle, he further neglected his duties, and it was found that there was no tribunal here—except by reference to the Vice-Admiralty Court, which would be a very cumbrous proceeding—empowered to enter upon an inquiry into that man's conduct. In the Bill now before the House it was proposed to constitute a local tribunal with authority to

enquire into any charge of incompetency or misconduct that might be made against the master, mate, or engineer of any British ship which may arrive, or be, in any port in the Colony, irrespective of the result of such incompetency or misconduct:—such a tribunal, in fact, as was contemplated by the 242nd section of the Merchant Shipping Act. It was proposed that the principal officer of Customs, assisted by a Justice of the Peace, should constitute the tribunal. This was provided for in the first clause of the Bill. The second section was founded on a section of the New South Wales Act, and declared that the tribunal thus created shall be constituted a court within the meaning of the 25 and 26 Vict., c. 63, s. 23. The third section of the Bill gave the court power, under certain circumstances only, to suspend or cancel certificates, where they found that a master, or mate, or engineer, had been guilty of any gross act of misconduct, drunkenness, or tyranny—or, that by his wrongful act or default, had caused the loss or abandonment of a ship, or any serious damage thereto, or loss of life. The fourth clause merely incorporated the Bill before the House with the existing Ordinance dealing with inquiries into wrecks. He thought the Bill would prove a very useful piece of legislation.

MR. SHENTON said it afforded him much pleasure to support the principle of the Bill before the House, knowing as he did from his own personal experience how much legislation in this direction was called for. In illustration of this fact, the hon. member quoted the recent case of the *Ivy*. The captain of that vessel died at sea, and the mate, who then assumed the command of the ship, did not put an appearance on deck for twenty-one consecutive days. After his arrival in port, at Fremantle, he came on shore and commenced a drinking bout, and never went near the ship for four days. There was no local Ordinance under which he (Mr. Shenton, to whom the vessel was consigned) could proceed against him, without resort to the Vice-Admiralty Court,—an expensive and cumbrous process, and notwithstanding the man's gross misconduct and negligence there was no Ordinance under which he could be summarily dealt with.

The Bill before the house supplied this want, and was a very desirable measure.

MR. STEERE also believed it was a very necessary Bill indeed; he was very glad the Government had brought it forward, and he would be prepared to support it. But there were some alterations which he would like to see made. He did not approve of the constitution of the court, which he thought would be a most incompetent tribunal. Both the principal Officer of Customs and the Justice of the Peace assisting him might be men entirely ignorant of nautical affairs.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said they would be empowered, under a local Ordinance now in force, to appoint a nautical assessor, to assist them, if they deemed such assistance necessary.

MR. STEERE did not think that, under the provisions of the Bill now under consideration, the court need appoint an assessor, and he certainly thought that a nautical assessor should be one of the members of the court. Another objection he had to the Bill in its present form was that that portion of the Imperial Act within the meaning of which it was proposed to constitute the court was not incorporated in the Bill itself. These Imperial Acts were frequently not available to magistrates, and he thought that in all instances where sections of an Imperial Act were alluded to in a local Ordinance such sections should be incorporated therewith.

The motion for the second reading was then agreed to.

STEAM COMMUNICATION WITH INDIA.

MR. PADBURY, in accordance with notice, moved, That an Humble Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, praying that he will cause to be offered a subsidy of £3,000 per annum to any person or persons who will place a steamer of not less than 350 tons nett register and 100 horse power, to run between the ports of this Colony, the Straits Settlements, and India if required; or £5,000 per annum to any person or persons who will place two such steamers on our coast: such steamer or steamers to carry any mails this Government may require; and such subsidy to extend over three years from the time they commence to run. The hon. member said it was needless for him to travel over the same

ground that he had done last session when he moved a motion of a somewhat similar character. He could only say that he regretted very much that the House had not then adopted the resolution, but it was no use saying anything about that now. He was now prepared with several offers from the best of builders on the Clyde, and he had also in his possession a letter relating to the subject from the firm of Messrs. Macdonald & Co., and from Captain Audley Coote. (Letters read). The prices quoted in Messrs. Macdonald's letter were somewhat less than he had anticipated twelve months ago. Had his proposition then been accepted, they should have had three steamers here now, and, instead of the Government having to call for tenders for a steamer to carry the mails, we should have had one of those available. Latterly there had been much complaint between the public and the butchers about the price of meat, but had there been a steamer plying regularly between this part of the Colony and Nickol Bay, there would have been no cause for such complaint. Hon. members were aware that at the time when our stock in this part of the country was in the worst condition, stock at Nickol Bay was in the best condition, and there was no scarcity of it, either. A steamer would be able to bring, every trip, a number of fat sheep and cattle for the markets at Fremantle and Perth; and he thought the people of these towns would be glad to see a steamer, if only for that reason. He need not, however, enter into the advantages which would be derived from the establishment of steam communication as proposed in the resolution; he had gone into that question at considerable length last session. He would now content himself by moving the resolution, and placing the correspondence and the information he had collected at the disposal of the House.

MR. RANDELL, having seconded the hon. member's motion last session, said he had great pleasure in doing so again, this session. Like the hon. member himself, he was sorry that nothing had resulted from his motion last year; but he thought the feeling of the House then and now was somewhat different, with regard to the question. He ventured to believe hon. members would be inclined

to regard the proposition with more favor now than they were six months ago. He thought the Colony was indebted to the hon. member for Swan for the activity and energy he had displayed in this question of establishing steam communication between this Colony and India, especially as the scheme was not one which could affect his own interests much; on the contrary, he believed the hon. member had been actuated by a purely patriotic feeling. He had an instrument in his hands which, if rightly directed, would tend to forward the best interests of the Colony. He (Mr. Randell) knew of nothing more calculated to develop the resources of the country than that the Government should grant the subsidy asked for in the proposition before the House. It was an axiom pretty generally acknowledged now, that colonial governments might advantageously undertake to render assistance to private enterprise, where such aid could not be expected from the Imperial Government; and he thought this was a project which the local Government should come forward to support and foster by every means within its power. He thought the Colony generally would be inclined to think that the Government was moving in the right direction, if it acceded to the prayer of the address contemplated in the motion before the House. He believed that the members of that House would be ready and willing to concede at once that the Colony possessed resources which could be developed by means of the proposed undertaking. Personally, he believed there was very little fear of the scheme not being self-supporting. He trusted that no hon. member of that House took so gloomy a view of the position of the Colony as was taken by some persons, who were supposed to be leaders of public opinion. He believed, with many, that the Colony was possessed of valuable resources, which only required skill and capital to develop, and this was a movement in that direction. Regard being had to our geographical position, India might be looked upon as the natural outlet for our commerce—even more so than the neighboring colonies. The trade with those colonies would always be against us, and we should look in another direction for an outlet for our products—

that direction being India and "the East"—more properly speaking, "the West." In addition to the postal facilities which the scheme projected by the hon. member for Swan would afford, it would also tend to direct to this Colony a portion of that stream of passengers always travelling between India and Australia. In short, he thought our truest interests lay in creating and fostering a trade with India and the intermediate settlements; and it appeared to him that a reason could be given why we should act with promptitude in the matter, for it was the intention of South Australia—and he admired the energy of that community—to make Port Darwin a *dépôt* for India, its evident intention being to take steps with a view to carry a line of railway right through the continent as far as Port Darwin on the extreme North, and make that port the emporium of "the East." He thought we should do well to be in the field before our neighbors, because such a step would benefit all classes of the community. It might be said there was some risk in the project; but he did not think that was a matter for the Government to consider, so long as it was not asked to become shareholders in the proposed company. The Government was merely asked to guarantee a subsidy. He believed there were many people who would readily take shares in the projected company, for steamers were always of equal value, and, if found necessary, they might be sold, and, indeed, prove a profitable investment. He felt that he need not detain the House any longer; all must be satisfied that the scheme before it was one calculated to advance the best interests of the Colony. There was something definite now before the House, upon which it could look with reliance; and if the Council and the Government were prepared to grant the subsidy prayed for, we should not be long before direct steam communication between this Colony and India would be an established fact. He did trust that, after the efforts made in the matter by the hon. member for Swan, and the very satisfactory data he had collected and laid before the House, hon. members would unanimously entertain the proposition now submitted for their consideration.

MR. SHENTON said he had opposed the motion when brought before the

House last session, but had at the same time mentioned that if the hon. member brought forward the scheme in a different form, merely asking for a subsidy, he would support him; and he was happy to do so now. He believed the steamers alluded to in the letters read would be well suited for the trade, and if we could get them, with a bonus of £3,000 for one, or £5,000 for two, he thought every hon. member present should support the resolution. It would of course be understood that the steamer should call at Nickol Bay, so as to afford regular steam communication with the northern parts of the Colony.

MR. BURGESS said he was at all times glad to see propositions of this kind brought before the House. He considered steam communication very necessary with the outer world, and he felt pleasure in rising to support the motion, provided that vessels of sufficient capacity could be obtained for the subsidy asked for. At present there was one part of the Colony, and an important part, too, almost entirely cut off from communication with this portion of the country: he alluded to the Northern Settlement. There were valuable resources in that part of the Colony—such as copper and lead mines—which might be opened up if we established regular communication. He did not think they had much there to import at present to this part of the Colony; but, if things improved in the way he hoped they would, no doubt they would be able to open up a considerable export trade. With regard to the steamer touching at Nickol Bay, it would prove of great advantage to that settlement, affording, as it would, an opportunity for the settlers to send their stock not only to this market, but to Singapore and elsewhere. He really thought that the North District was entitled to consideration at the hands of hon. members, if only for the sake of bringing it into closer communication with the other districts of the Colony. The district was one which was greatly increasing in importance, and likely to do so. He believed the project before the House would, moreover, prove beneficial to the whole Colony, and he hoped it would receive the favorable consideration of the Council.

MR. STEERE said the proposition

now before the House was a very different one to that submitted by the hon. member for Swan last year. He (Mr. Steere) himself was not at all sorry that the previous proposition had not been adopted, for he believed the Colony would have lost considerably by it. But he was quite prepared to support the proposition to subsidise one steamer to the extent of £3,000, but not two steamers. They should see, first of all, if one would pay; if it did, and it was seen there was work for another, no doubt that House would vote a subsidy for another. He thought the motion was somewhat vague; it did not particularise what the nature and extent of the service required of the steamer should be. He considered that before the Council voted any money for the purpose in view, they should have an opportunity of expressing their wishes on these matters. He had reason to suppose that the Government did not intend to oppose the motion; and when the House came to discuss the Estimates, if it were found that there were funds available for offering the subsidy asked, the proposal would no doubt receive the support of the House.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had listened with much pleasure, and with interest, to what had been said with reference to the establishment of steam communication between this Colony and India. He was further pleased to be able to state that the present Administration were favorable to the scheme, and would support it as far as in its power to do so, if the members of that House would unite in co-operating with the Government, and provided, that when the Estimates came to be considered in committee, there were found sufficient ways and means to offer the subsidy proposed to be given. Of course, in the proposition before the House it was not intended to enter minutely into the details of the scheme, but merely to ascertain the feeling of the House as to whether hon. members approved or disapproved of the scheme generally. Personally, as the hon. member for the Swan was aware, he had for years been an advocate for the establishment of ocean steam communication between this Colony and India. He did think that, if we were looking out for the Colony to progress, we should endeavor to connect

ourselves with that great empire (India); and he believed the result of establishing direct steam communication between us and it would be such as it would be impossible at present to speculate. Not only would we find a ready market for colonial products, but we should tend to direct to this Colony a portion of that constant stream of immigration which was going on between India and other settlements. Every year there was a large number of civil servants and of officers connected with the military service in India who were seeking, at a convenient distance, some salubrious climate where they could go in order to recruit their health, and where also they could send their children to be educated. No colony, possessing such a climate as ours, was so favorably situated, geographically, as regarded India, as our own. Only a fortnight's voyage by steam separated us, and he had no doubt whatever that, with such a means of communication available, a large number of invalids and others would periodically visit us, spending their money amongst us, and bringing the Colony more into notice every year. Not only would one particular district be benefited by such a project, but the whole Colony would, directly and indirectly, derive the greatest advantages from it. He had for some years back interested himself much in the scheme, and had entered into calculations as to its likelihood of being a profitable one, and he was quite of opinion with the hon. member for Swan that it would. He thought the present a very opportune time for obtaining the service of a steamer, as the prices of steamers were much lower now than they had been. On the part of the Government, he might say again, that the present administration would be pleased to be able to support the proposal of the hon. member for Swan, should it be found that the necessary ways and means would be available.

MR. MARMION expressed a feeling of disappointment that the hon. member for Swan was not prepared with some more definite scheme to place before the House than this. He thought some steps would have to be taken, either to alter the terms of the resolution, or, it would be necessary to postpone the debate until a future occasion, so as to put the motion

more in accord with the wishes of hon. members. He could not say that he shared the sanguine anticipations of those who expected such great results from the establishment of steam communication with India. He was at a loss to know what was to produce those results. He would like to be informed what were to be the items of exports to be sent from this Colony to India, and what the items of imports from India to this Colony would be. If those items were few—and he did not think either the exports or the imports would be very extensive—he failed to see how the scheme could be regarded as a profitable investment. He dared say there might be a chance for one steamer, or, possibly, two small steamers, paying, with such a subsidy as was here asked for, so long as they confined their route to Fremantle, Champion Bay, Nickol Bay, and the Straits Settlements; but, beyond that, he felt positive, in his own mind, that the enterprise would not be a profitable one. It might be said we should have live stock to export, but he would like to know what live stock we could send away if a steamer came here within the next three months. What was the cry now, all over the Colony? The high price of meat. Had they any live stock, fat cattle or sheep, for exportation? [AN HON. MEMBER: Yes]. Where were they? [AN HON. MEMBER: Nickol Bay]. The hon. gentleman said “Nickol Bay”: probably he was not aware of the price of stock there—6d. a pound for fat beef, and from £1 to £1 5s. each for fat sheep. He doubted very much, indeed, whether at those prices it would pay to export fat stock to India. The hon. member for Swan might imagine that in making these observations he was desirous of throwing a damper upon the scheme. Not at all. If the resolution should be adopted, it would no doubt be a step in the right direction, and, being a progressive step, he felt that he could not oppose it. But really he did not think it would result in profitable returns. He repeated, he would have been more pleased had the hon. member for Swan been prepared with some more definite scheme, as to the route to be adopted, the size of the steamer, its intended cost, etc., before proceeding to business on a motion of this kind. He did not know

what steps the House proposed to take in the matter; personally, he was in accord with the hon member for Wellington, that we should commence with one steamer, which certainly would suffice for some time to come; should it then be found that another steamer was required, it would be very easy to increase the subsidy. Unless the motion were altered so as to confine it to one steamer he could not support it, and would be compelled to move an amendment.

MR. PADBURY said he had put the motion as clear as possible. He did not ask for two steamers. He left the House to decide whether they would have two, or one, or none at all. With reference to not bringing forward a more definite scheme, he had the sizes and prices of several steamers before him, and any hon. member was welcome to see them. He failed to see why he should have come forward with any cut-and-dried scheme, or a definite route. That was for the House to decide. His own opinion was that the route should be between the ports of this Colony, the Straits Settlements, and India if required. He was quite willing to put his hands in his pockets and subscribe towards one or two steamers, if a private company were about to be formed. He regarded the scheme more favorably than the hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Marmion). He thought that, with the blessing of God, and a good season, we should have cattle at a much cheaper rate than at present.

MR. BURT was glad to see the hon. member for Fremantle endeavoring to stem the torrent of favorable opinion with which the scheme had been received. He intended to take up his (Mr. Marmion's) side of the question, and to oppose the proposal, for one or two reasons, which appeared to him to be very good ones. Of course, they all hailed such resolutions as these in first looking at them, because they were resolutions that must tend towards our prosperity, in the event of our being in a position to carry them out efficiently. He was sure the House must feel obliged to the hon. member for Swan for the trouble he had taken in collecting information with reference to the matter; but he did not understand that the hon. member had a direct offer from any person or company to place a steamer at

our service if a subsidy of £3000 were offered. He very much doubted if we could get a steamer here for that subsidy. [AN HON. MEMBER: Make it £5000.] Had they got it to give. Moreover, he questioned whether such a steamer would pay. He did not think we could ever hope to give it freight from any port in this Colony: in the course of two or three trips it would take away all the fat sheep in the Nickol Bay District. When the *Georgette* first arrived, it was said that she would bring down a large number of sheep from Champion Bay; but he had never seen them. They wanted sheep at Nickol Bay, and those who had them would keep them. It would not pay them to send them down to our butchers. Again he would ask the House to look at this question in connection with the circumstances surrounding them at present. There was the motion of the hon. member for Wellington with respect to the initiation of public works—and no doubt it was very necessary that public works should be initiated. If they were, they would attract population, and, with an increased population, there might be some prospect of the scheme now under discussion being a success. This £5000 asked for as a subsidy would pay the interest on £100,000, which would make a railway from Fremantle to Guildford at once. Would anybody contend for a moment that it would be better to provide steam communication with India than to construct such a line of railway? It must be apparent to all that the question of a railway should take precedence in all respects. Let them first have the railway, and then they might talk to him about the steamer. No doubt it would be very convenient for individuals to be able to run backward and forward to India, but he did not think the Colony would be justified in paying a subsidy of £3000 for that purpose. It was with reluctance that he felt compelled to record his vote against the resolution before the House. Had it been brought forward at a later period of the Session, after provision had been made for public works of greater importance, and it were found that there was still something left, he might have been inclined to have regarded the matter in a different light.

MR. STEERE said, had he the slight-

est idea that the scheme under discussion would prevent any other scheme of public works to be discussed on the following Monday from being carried out, he certainly would not support the resolution of the hon. member for Swan. He did not think hon. members were committing themselves at present to anything; and it was only on the understanding that, after providing for whatever scheme of public works the House would decide upon, there would still be a surplus available, he gave his support to the motion before the House. He agreed with the hon. member Mr. Burt, and with the hon. member for Fremantle that the scheme would not be a profitable speculation; but what was that to us? We would not be the owners of the steamer; we merely would have to guarantee the subsidy. He did not want to discourage people from coming here, and it would not do for us to throw any discouragement in the way of capitalists coming here, if they chose to do so; but, he repeated, he very much shared the views of the two hon. members he had named as to the improbability of the project paying. He did not think stock in this Colony would increase in greater proportion than the population; on the contrary he was afraid that there was more chance of meat becoming dearer than becoming cheaper.

MR. RANDELL thought the whole of the hon. member Mr. Burt's arguments relating to a steamer applied with greater force to a railway. What would be the use of a railway if it did not increase production? He thought the two schemes should go hand in hand together: a railway between Perth and the Eastern Districts was not going to pay, for local consumption alone—they must have a foreign market as an outlet for surplus produce.

MR. CROWTHER said—not to give a silent vote—he would support the resolution. Whether the project would or would not pay directly was not what they had to consider: the question was—would it pay the country indirectly. The hon. member Mr. Burt had said that £5,000—the greater of the two amounts of the subsidies—would pay the interest on £100,000, which would construct a railway from Perth to Guildford; but the hon. member forgot that the

subsidy was only for three years, whereas the interest would extend over seven times three. If the mountain would not come to Mahommed, then Mahommed must go to the mountain; and this seemed to be the case here with regard to these steamers. As to the probable traffic, he would ask hon. members what traffic had they on the coast before the introduction of steam communication. As to the scheme before the House not being more definite than it was, he thought that the details should be a matter for after-consideration. He did not think that the scheme could be perfected until the subsidy had actually been voted.

MR. MARMION said hon. gentlemen were rather illogical. One said it was a matter of indifference to us whether the venture would pay or not. But it would not be a matter of indifference to the owners of the steamer; and, if it did not pay, the steamer would be withdrawn, or we should have to increase the subsidy. Another hon. member had said that, whereas the interest on the railway construction would extend over twenty-one years, the subsidy for the steamer was only sought for a period of three years. Did the hon. member think that the service would be continued, without the subsidy, especially if an unprofitable service?

MR. CROWTHER thought it very likely that at the end of three years, or before, the steamer *would* pay.

MR. BROWN was sorry the hon. member for Swan had not this session pursued the same plan as he had done last year, namely, place the statistics he had collected before the House, so as to enable hon. members to see for themselves whether the scheme was one likely to pay or not. He (Mr. Brown) could not say anything about the hon. member's figures, but he had great faith in his shrewdness. It had been shown last year that the venture would be a profitable one; surely it would be more so under the conditions now proposed. As for himself, he thought that one steamer alone would defeat the object in view. The hon. member for Swan had, it appeared, been in communication with Sir Audley Coote—a very reliable authority, he believed, and one who, it seemed, had taken great interest in this very question. Sir Audley said that he

had read with much interest the papers and statistics forwarded to him by the hon. member for Swan—the same statistics, he presumed, as had been laid on the table of the House—and, in his (Sir Audley Coote's) opinion they were such as were calculated to afford great encouragement to the placing of steamers here, adding that if the Government would state it was prepared to grant a subsidy of about £5000 per annum, he himself believed that his connection with the other Colonies and India would enable him to get a further subsidy of £10,000, which would place three steamers instead of one at our disposal. One very important point in connection with the question of whether or not the scheme was likely to pay, was that of immigration. This Colony for some years past had paid a large sum of money to bring out immigrants from England. For years to come large sums of money would also have to be expended in immigration. He had often expressed his belief that we should have to give up going to England for anything like the class of labor we require here, and direct our attention to the East for a supply of such labor. These steamers would have the benefit of that, and the transport of these emigrants would be no unimportant item. He did not think we would have a large influx of retired Indian officers here, as some hon. gentlemen seemed to imagine. These men, as a rule, were men possessing large means, and they had all the world before them where to chose. There were other countries possessing a climate equal to ours, and possessing also much greater attractions. He, however, intended to support the proposition before the House in its entirety, on the understanding, of course, that the details—to be hereafter considered—proved satisfactory. We must stipulate precisely the nature of the service to be performed.

MR. MARMION asked the hon. member to consider what was the nature of the scheme proposed by Captain Audley Coote, which was simply to make Fremantle a port of call for steamers plying between Bombay, Adelaide, and Hobart Town. Would it be worth while for this Colony to pay a subsidy of £5,000 a year, simply for the gratification of seeing a large steamer call at Fremantle once a

month, remaining there about twenty-four hours, take in coals, and possibly land a few passengers, and then proceed to the more favored lands of South Australia and Tasmania. He thought it a matter for serious consideration, whether the Colony could, at the present time, expend this sum of money upon such a scheme. Possibly it might afford to offer the lesser subsidy (£3,000) by way of experiment; but when it came to £5,000 he thought the House should pause before committing the Colony to such an expenditure.

MR. BROWN said he would not be prepared to accept Captain Coote's proposal in the shape in which it was then before the House: of course that gentleman could not expect to have it all his own way, and the probability was, he might be induced to perform the precise service which we require.

MR. HAMERSLEY said he fully endorsed every word that had fallen from the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Randell). The objections raised by the hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Marmion) appeared to him to be quite beside the question. If there was any reason in them, he (Mr. Hamersley) would have been prepared to have gone with the hon. member; but there was no reason in his objections. As for our not being able to produce sufficient articles to export, if such really was the case, then indeed was our position far worse than he had ever conceived it to be. It was said that we could not afford to pay this £3000 now: how was it, then, we could afford, years ago, to give a subsidy of £4000 to the *Georgette*? Surely we could better afford it now than then. Personally, he was of opinion that the scheme would be a remunerative one. So long as we traded with the neighboring colonies, we should find that the balance would be in favor of those colonies; but, if we traded direct with India, we should find that we had the best of it. If hon. members were afraid to launch out to this small extent, better collapse at once, and give up the ghost. They reminded him of a snail, frightened of its own shadow. As to the question whether it would be better to expend the money on a railway or in establishing steam communication with India, he thought the latter the most important. What would be the use of a railway

between Guildford and Fremantle unless we could export the surplus produce brought down by that railway. If the hon. member for Swan would increase the amount of the subsidy to £5000 for one steamer, and £8000 for two, he (Mr. Hamersley) would have much pleasure in supporting him.

MR. RANDELL moved, That progress be reported, and leave given to sit again. Agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Monday, 14th August 1876.

Public Works: Motion by Mr. Steere.

PUBLIC WORKS.

MR. STEERE rose to move the following resolution standing in his name:—

(1.) That this Council regrets to find that the Government have expressed no intention of introducing, for its consideration, any proposed scheme of Public Works. (2.) That it is absolutely essential, for the future progress and well-being of the Colony, that a comprehensive system of Public Works, combined with Immigration, should be initiated without delay. (3.) That a select committee be appointed to consider and report to the Council what Public Work could be most advantageously commenced, keeping in view its extension and connection with future undertakings, whether Railways or Harbor Works.

The hon. member believed everyone would agree with him that the motion was a very momentous one, and deserving of the most serious consideration of the House. He considered the present position of the Colony a very critical one. There was a great falling off in the exports in connection with three of the staple industries of the Colony, which alone represented a revenue of £100,000, and he had no doubt that other industries would be much depressed, regard being had to the very unfavorable prospects of the season. Unless the Colony were soon blessed with a copious and continued