

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

Legislative Council—Session of 1877.

Opened on Tuesday, 10th July, 1877.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Tuesday, 10th July, 1877.

Opening of Council—The Governor's Speech—Privilege Bill—Address in Reply to Governor's Speech.

OPENING OF COUNCIL.

THE Council was prorogued by His Excellency The Governor on the 13th September, 1876, to the 14th March, 1877, thence to 14th May; thence to 26th May; thence to 10th July, on which day it met for the despatch of business.

The Council met at 3 o'clock, p.m.

Shortly afterwards, HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR entered the Chamber and took the Chair.

THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

HIS EXCELLENCY was then pleased to deliver the following Speech:—

"MR. SPEAKER, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,—

In meeting you again for the despatch of public business, I am happy to inform you that the condition and prospects of the Colony are, in many respects, satisfactory.

The revenue collected from colonial sources during 1876 amounted to £147,335, and exceeded the estimate by £3,085. The total revenue for the twelve months, inclusive of the Imperial grant-in-aid, was £162,189. The actual expenditure for the same period (£179,484) exceeded the estimated expenditure by £6,341, and exceeded the revenue by £17,295;

but the difference was more than met by the balance from 1875, and after providing for the total expenditure of the year, including various unforeseen and unavoidable items, there remained a balance to the credit of the Colony, on the 31st December, of £6,869.

The balance in the chest on the 30th June last was £17,400, and there is every prospect that it will be larger by the end of the year.

The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 1878 will be laid before you in due course, and I doubt not that you will provide with your usual liberality for the requirements of the Public Service.

The Imports and Exports are steadily increasing in value, having risen, the former from £349,840 in 1875 to £386,036 in 1876, the latter from £391,217 to £397,292 during the same period. No better proof could be desired of the healthy condition of the Colony than that which these figures afford, and you will find, on examining the estimates of Customs Revenue for 1878, that we calculate on a further improvement during the course of the coming year.

The Reports of the heads of the various Departments for 1876 will be submitted to you, from which you will obtain a clear insight into the departmental transactions of the Government during the period under review.

The Report of the Surveyor General on Crown Lands and Surveys is, as usual, an interesting document. You will observe that while the revenue from Land Sales

fell short of the amount received in 1875 by £2444—a reduction which may be somewhat attributed to the fall in the price of wool—the revenue from the rental of Crown Lands shows an improvement of £1326 as compared with the year preceding, and that if the special receipts for Guano Licenses and the rent of certain islands be included, the result gives an increase in the total receipt of the Department of £417 over those of 1875.

The total area of land under rental for Agricultural and Pastoral purposes in 1876 exceeded the area under rental in 1875 by 3,892,061 acres,—an extension of settlement which testifies to the progress of the Colony. The breadth of land under wheat was smaller than in 1875, but it is to be hoped that the almost entire disappearance of red rust last harvest, and the present low price of sandalwood, may induce the farmer to pay more attention to his land, and that an increased area of country will this season be brought into cultivation. This result is earnestly to be desired, seeing that, although much of our land is as good as any in Australia, we have imported flour and grain to the value of about £40,000 during the last eighteen months.

This seems a fitting place to remark that in forwarding to the Secretary of State the report of your Select Committee on the proposed alteration of the Land Regulations, I have supported your recommendation that Regulation 93 may be repealed, or so far modified as to enable the Government to grant such additional grazing rights to small farmers as may be found to be necessary for the permanent settlement of the Colony. Despatches on this subject will be communicated to you.

Another interesting Report is that of the Postmaster-General for 1876. Mr. Helmich justly remarks that “there is “probably no Department of Government “the records of which will furnish stronger “proof of the progress of the Colony, “socially and commercially, than the “Post and Telegraph Office”; and I feel sure that a perusal of his report, and an examination of the instructive returns which accompany it, will be highly satisfactory to you. You will observe that the local Money Order system, which was

brought into operation on the 1st July last, has made good progress, and that the benefits of the Savings' Bank system continue to be appreciated by the public. Mr. Helmich remarks that the advantage which has been taken of this system by the public has exceeded his most sanguine expectations, and indicates the confidence which is placed in it, coupled with a conviction of its great usefulness, not only as a ready means of security for money, but also as an inducement to provident habits on the part of the working and other classes of the community. On the 31st December the depositors numbered 1397, and the total deposits amounted to £25,923, the proportion of depositors to population being 1 in 20, and the average to each depositor £18 11s. 2d.

From the Report of the Colonial Surgeon you will learn that the public health has been exceptionally good, the dry and somewhat protracted winter of 1876 having resulted in an almost entire absence of malaria. The death rate continues low, though on the subject of infant mortality, and diseases incident to an efficient system of surface drainage, the remarks of the Colonial Surgeon are deserving of the most careful attention.

The Report of the Director of Public Works on works authorized and in progress is satisfactory.

The permanent way of the Geraldton and Northampton Railway has been laid and ballasted for a distance of fourteen miles. The Chapman Bridge (the only one of any importance on the line) has been finished. The whole of the sleepers required have been delivered by the contractor, and Mr. Thomas is able to report that, after many difficulties and delays, the works on this Railway are now in a fair way to completion.

The construction of the Eucla Telegraph Line has been pushed forward energetically, and there is reason to hope that the working parties of the respective Governments will shortly meet on the frontier. On our side the stations at Bremer Bay, Esperance and Israelite Bay, have been opened for communication, and from South Australia the reports of progress are satisfactory. The work would have advanced more rapidly in both Colonies but for the extreme dryness of the season. The Postmaster-General of South Australia states that their opera-

tions had to be suspended altogether for several months, and on this side great difficulties have been experienced in the heaviest section of the work, now finished. The Eucla Station, which by arrangement with the South Australian Government is intended for the accommodation of the officers of both Colonies, is in course of construction, and will soon be ready for shipment, when the Superintendent of Telegraphs will leave with the officers for Eucla to open communication between the Colonies. The amount expended on this line up to the 30th June was £33,544. It speaks well for the Colony that we have been able to undertake this heavy work out of current revenue without in any way crippling our resources.

While on the subject of telegraphic communication, I may mention that the Report of the Surveyor General, by whom we were efficiently represented at the Conference which was held at Sydney in January last, will be placed before you, together with further correspondence with reference to the proposed duplication of the Anglo-Australian Cable.

As regards minor works, I have to inform you that the leading lights at Champion Bay have been completed and were illuminated for the first time in October; that the iron tower for the light at Point Moore has arrived in the Colony in charge of the mechanic who is to superintend its erection; that the new lighthouse at Fremantle, commenced in August last, and which since then has been carried on by convict labour, is making fair progress: that a new telegraph office has been erected at the Williams; that important additions are being made to the Albany jetty; and that the steam dredge has been employed on useful work in improving the navigation of the river at Perth and Fremantle. For a complete list of the works undertaken during the course of the year I must refer you to Mr. Thomas' Report. I will detain you no longer on this subject than to observe that plans and specifications have been prepared and tenders invited for the construction of a line of telegraph from York to Beverley, and for the building of school houses at Perth, Fremantle, Northam, and Geraldton. For the first named school house a contract has been taken and the building is in course of erection. A contract has

also been taken for the construction of a boat jetty at Owen's Anchorage, for the sum of £385.

In reviewing the transactions of the year, I may allude to the negotiations successfully conducted by the Surveyor General, when in Melbourne, for placing a new steamer on the coast. The vessel engaged by Mr. Fraser is a great improvement on the "Georgette," and is admirably adapted to our requirements, but I regret to learn from the owners that the traffic is far below their expectations, and that unless business improves, or the subsidy be increased by Government, they will be obliged to terminate the contract as soon as they are entitled to do so, namely, at the end of the first twelve months. Under the existing contract the steamer travels some 14,820 miles annually in the conveyance of mails, the average cost of the service, at the present subsidy of £4,200, being about 5s. 8d. per mile. It is to be hoped that the mercantile community will be able to throw sufficient business in the way of the steamer to ensure her retention on the coast.

Within the last month a proposal has been made to me by the Banda Steam Navigation Association of Soerabaya to run a line of steamers between Singapore and Fremantle, for a subsidy of £4000 per annum, the service to be bi-monthly, and for a term of three or five years. The subsidy asked exceeds the amount voted by you for this purpose last session by £1000 a year, but the offer appears to be so favorable that I will ask you to sanction the additional subsidy required, in the event of our negotiations with the company proving satisfactory. Correspondence on this subject will be presented to you.

In the matter of projected undertakings, I have to inform you that preliminary surveys for the proposed line of Railway from Fremantle to Perth and Guildford—being the first section of a future line to the Eastern Districts—have been completed, and that estimates of the cost of the work, with full information on all necessary points, have been forwarded to the Secretary of State. Papers on this subject will be laid before you. The Director of Public Works estimates the cost of the Railway by the Northern route at £87,098, by the Southern route

at £99,121, and by an alternative route running on the South side of the river from Fremantle to Perth, and on the North side from Perth to Guildford, at £108,125; and—accepting as approximately correct the estimate of traffic prepared by a Select Committee of this Council in 1875, and concurred in by a second committee in 1876—he calculates on a balance of £12,616 per annum to the good, after providing for interest and working expenses. I have informed the Secretary of State that for my own part I see no reason to dissent from the estimate of traffic prepared and adopted by your Honorable House, and I have expressed the hope that His Lordship may feel justified in authorizing me to proceed at once with this desirable and much needed undertaking. On receipt of His Lordship's reply, I shall be prepared to summon a special meeting of Council for the consideration of the legislation which will be necessary in the event of the work being approved.

Further papers relative to the proposed Harbor Works at Fremantle will be presented to you. The additional information called for by Sir John Coode in November last, has been furnished to him, and I hope to be able to acquaint you with his final opinion on this important question before the end of the Session.

Steps have been taken for the representation of the products of the Colony at the forthcoming Paris Exhibition. I trust you will agree with me that it is desirable so favorable an opportunity of drawing attention to our resources should not be lost, and that you will be prepared to place at my disposal a sum sufficient for the purpose.

Correspondence on the subject of Immigration will be communicated to you. One hundred and seventy Immigrants have been introduced since the beginning of the year, at a total cost of £3,355, being at the rate of about £19 15s. per head. I am happy to say that the last batch of Immigrants was probably superior to any which preceded it. Full instructions have been given to our Agents in London as to the class of persons required, and I need only repeat what I said to you last year, that I shall be prepared to expend your votes for this purpose so long as the new comers find

employment in a manner which shall indicate that their presence is required in the Colony. The question of Immigration is one which will necessarily occupy my attention in conjunction with that of the proposed line of Railway from Fremantle to Perth and Guildford.

Reports from the Stipendiary Magistrates with reference to the working of the 41st section of the Licensing Act of 1872, as amended by the 39th Victoria, No. 11, together with a memorandum from the Superintendent of Police upon the same subject, will be laid before you. Those who desire the repeal of the amending Act would do well to study these papers with care. They will find therein abundant evidence of the beneficial character of the new clause, and a general concurrence of opinion expressed that it is only the unscrupulous publican who has anything to fear from its operation.

The measures to be presented for your consideration include Bills to amend the Industrial Schools Act; to amend the Imported Stock Act; to make further provision for the maintenance of discipline among prisoners employed outside the walls of a prison; to provide for the more convenient administration of the Extradition Acts of 1870 and 1873; to make further provision for the audit of accounts of Local Road Boards; and to amend the Law relating to Procedure at the Election of Members to serve in the Legislative Council, by abolishing proxy voting and substituting voting by ballot.

In framing the Ballot Bill my great desire has been to let the elector feel that perfect secrecy may be relied on, and I believe that the measure, as drafted, will secure this important result. A chart will be laid before you showing the localities at which, under the authority conferred on the Governor by the 6th section of the 33rd Victoria, No. 13, I propose that polling places shall in the first instance be established. It was feared, I believe, that, owing to the great extent of our territory, the expense attendant on a system of voting by ballot would be more than the Colony would be justified in incurring for such a purpose; but this I find is a mistake, and that by making use of thirty-two Police Stations, three Telegraph Offices, and four selected Stations, nineteen-twentieths of the whole

population will be brought within a radius of not exceeding fifteen miles from one or other of the polling places. But even were the difficulties and the cost far greater than we have any reason to anticipate, I consider that the time has come for dealing with this highly important question, and I beg leave earnestly to recommend it to your deliberate and impartial consideration.

Questions connected with the payment of teachers under the Elementary Education Act, and with the sale of Colonial Wine, as regulated by the 10th clause of the Licensing Act of 1872, are now under my consideration, and will probably be brought to your notice in the course of the Session.

In commending these subjects to your care, I beg to assure you that I shall be prepared to give my best attention to any measures which may be brought forward by Members of Your Honorable House; and I earnestly pray that you may be guided by Divine Providence in the performance of the responsible duties which are entrusted to you by the Constitution of the Colony."

His Excellency then retired, having first handed a copy of the speech to Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker took the Chair.

PRIVILEGE BILL.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was his duty, in order to assert the rights and privileges of the House, and to conform to the practice hitherto adopted, to move a mere formal bill. He accordingly moved for leave to bring in a bill to make further provision for the maintenance of discipline among prisoners employed outside the walls of a prison.

Leave was given to introduce the bill, which was read a first time, the second reading being fixed for the following day.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

MR. CROWTHER rose to move that a respectful address in reply to the Governor's speech be presented to His Excellency, and expressed regret that the task of doing so had not fallen into better hands. The speech to which they had just listened would indeed be a wonderful production if it met with the

unanimous approval of the twenty-three hon. gentlemen to whom it had been addressed. He did not profess for one moment, nor did he wish the House to imagine, that he himself was perfectly in accord with every sentiment embodied in the Governor's speech. Indeed, he regarded the very fact of his having been selected to propose the resolution for an address in reply as a conclusive proof that His Excellency courted discussion of the policy therein foreshadowed rather than being desirous of stifling it. Neither His Excellency nor the members of that House could be actuated by any other desire than the advancement and welfare of the Colony. (MR. BROWN: Hear, hear.) It was not his intention to inflict anything in the shape of a long speech upon the House; if he had been so inclined, he knew the result would have been a failure. He would therefore content himself by briefly referring to some of the principal questions which His Excellency had touched upon in his address. The matter dealt with in the first few paragraphs of the speech, relating to the condition and prospects of the colony, could not be better expressed than in the language of the speech itself. It must be a gratifying matter to every one present to learn that, financially, the condition of the country was satisfactory. While, however, the total area of land under rental for agricultural and pastoral purposes last year were much in excess of the area under rental in the preceding year, the breadth of land under cultivation did not contrast at all favorably with the corresponding period. And, to his mind—without entering very fully into the question—he believed that so long as we continued the present system of handicapping the farmers, we might safely expect that the area of cultivated land would be less and less every year, until, before long, instead of having to import flour and grain from Adelaide to the extent mentioned in His Excellency's speech, we should have to import all we required for home consumption. The report of the Postmaster General appeared to be a very satisfactory document. It was gratifying to find that the local money order system had made such good progress since its introduction, and it was equally a matter of satisfaction to hear of the large proportion of depositors

in the Savings' Bank, as compared with the population, and that the average amount invested by each depositor had attained the respectable sum of £18 11s. 2d. With reference to the Geraldton and Northampton Railway—known also as the “blessed railway,” and the “unhappy railway,” *alias* the “white elephant”—he was delighted to hear that the line was now in a fair way to completion. (The hon. member here corrected a paragraph which had appeared in the newspapers that a new superintending engineer had been appointed in connection with the line.) With respect to the Eucla Telegraph, which was next referred to by His Excellency, he regarded this undertaking as the most important work of the Colony,—not even excepting harbor improvements at Fremantle; and he thought the Colony was to be congratulated on the fact that the work was progressing satisfactorily, notwithstanding very adverse circumstances. It was a very difficult task for a small community like this to cope with a Colony like South Australia in the carrying out of an undertaking such as this line of telegraph; but he was glad to think that when the sister colony had completed her share of the work, Western Australia would be ready to join hands with her. Referring to the paragraph dealing with projected undertakings, he was glad to find that the Government regarded the proposed line of railway from Fremantle to Guildford as the first section of a future line to York and the Eastern Districts. He was quite sure that, in the matter of railway construction, the education which the Government had received in connection with the Geraldton and Northampton line would prove of vast benefit to them in future undertakings of the kind, as a warning to avoid some of the rocks upon which they might otherwise have split. With reference to the question of Immigration, there was a rumour abroad in some quarters that the Government had taken steps to check the introduction of all classes of immigrants other than agricultural laborers. He hoped and believed there must be some misapprehension on this point. He could not conceive that such a prohibition should—as he was informed—be specially directed against the introduction of miners. It was indeed difficult

to imagine that the Government, having incurred the expense of constructing a railway for the purpose of developing the mining industry of the Colony, should take steps to check the importation of laborers, fitted by practice and experience, to work the mines. With respect to the measures promised for the consideration of the House, he would only allude to the proposed Ballot Bill, and his present impression with reference to that measure was that, if it came into operation as contemplated by its framers, hon. members would be returned to that House by about twenty-five votes each. He did not think the people of this Colony would go to the trouble of travelling fifteen miles to enjoy the privilege of exercising the franchise. His Excellency's speech had some weak points, no doubt, but on the whole he thought it might be regarded as satisfactory, and he would conclude by moving that an humble address be presented to His Excellency in reply thereto.

MR. BURT, in seconding the resolution, said he regarded the practice of adopting addresses in reply to these vice-regal speeches as a little more than a mere matter of form. It would be unwise, he thought, and improper, at the opening of the session, to inaugurate it with any violent debate calculated in any way to disturb the serenity of affairs. Nor was it to be expected that the proposer and seconder of an address in reply,—who must be regarded to a great extent as concurring, in the main, in the policy sketched out in the speech itself,—need enter at any length into detail on each particular subject referred to. On looking over His Excellency's speech, they found that it entered at some length into almost every matter that claimed, or professed to claim, the attention of the country. It put the House in possession of what had been done by the Government during the past twelve months, and gave a very clear sketch of the present condition and future prospects of the Colony, which, on the whole, appeared to be reassuring. He was sorry he could not agree with his hon. friend opposite (Mr. Crowther) in his remarks relative to the “handicapped” farmer; on some future occasion, perhaps the hon. member would inform the House in what respect he considers our farmers “handicapped.” He

was afraid the hon. member had not read through the paragraph in His Excellency's speech dealing with the agricultural interest, otherwise he would have seen that the weight which had for some years past depressed our farmers had been removed. He alluded to the disappearance of red rust. There was a paragraph in the speech relative to the public health, which he considered a very important subject, and one deserving of very careful attention. Although the public health during the past year had been exceptionally good, and the death rate continued low, the question of surface drainage was one which sooner or later must force itself upon the attention of the authorities. No doubt the extended powers given to municipal councils under the Act passed last session, would have a beneficial tendency in repressing nuisances arising from insufficient drainage, if the sanitary provisions were rigorously enforced; and he was glad to find that the municipal council of Perth had already shown itself alive to the importance of this subject. No vice-regal speech delivered at the opening of a session during the past few years would have been complete without reference to the Geraldton and Northampton railway, and he was glad to find, once more, that it was "in a fair way to completion." If things continued to progress as at present, they might hope, some day or other, to see the work actually completed. He was glad to hear that further correspondence with reference to the proposed duplication of the Anglo-Australian cable would be presented to the Council. He thought it would become the House to push that matter as much as possible upon the attention of the Government, and not allow it to be placed on one side, or be regarded as a question of secondary importance. It was a question fraught with important results to this Colony, and if they could induce capitalists to expend their money in the construction of a second cable from our North-west Coast, they would effect something of sterling importance to the material prospects of the Colony. His Excellency informed them that he anticipated that the owners of the coasting mail steamer "Rob Roy" would, at the end of the first twelve months of their contract with the Government, terminate the existing agree-

ments unless the traffic increased, and His Excellency, in order to ensure the retention of the steamer on the coast, rested his hopes on the mercantile community throwing sufficient business in the steamer's way to induce the owners to forego their intention of terminating their contract. He (Mr. Burt) did not think that the expectations of the owners of the steamer were cast in the same direction as those of His Excellency, but rather to an increased subsidy, and he believed that if we wished to retain the steamer in our waters a larger subsidy than £4000 would have to be provided. There was another matter in the vice-regal speech which he thought deserving of particular note, namely the communication the House had just received to the effect that within the last month a proposal had been made to the Government by the Banda Steam Navigation Co., to run a line of steamers between Singapore and Fremantle. His Excellency, in recommending this proposal to the favorable consideration of the House, had expressed a hope that the subsidy of £4000 per annum asked for by the company for a bi-monthly service, would be voted, in the event of negotiations with the Association being satisfactory. He (Mr. Burt) thought they would all agree that if a line of steamers could be started for that amount, it would be desirable at any rate to open the service, in order to see what prospect we had of maintaining any profitable trade relations between Singapore and this Colony. With regard to the various bills that were about to be submitted for the consideration of the House, he did not think it would be found they had any very difficult questions to deal with. The sessional programme seemed to be a rather meagre one, and consisted mainly of amendments upon existing enactments. So far as could be seen at present, the most likely subject to elicit discussion was the question of the route of the proposed railway between Fremantle and Guildford. Each route, no doubt, had its supporters in the House, and their respective merits would, in due time, be subject for debate. The Ballot Bill, too, he regarded as a measure of importance. Hon. members must all be glad to see that the Government had at last taken up the question. He said "at last,"

because he did not think the House would be likely to give the Government credit for voluntarily introducing that measure. They had, rather, been forced to bring it forward; therefore, so far as he was concerned, he was not inclined to give them much credit on that score. At the same time, it was gratifying to find that His Excellency, in deference to the expressed views of the House on so important a question as this, had caused a Bill to be prepared and submitted for their consideration at once. Last session, it would be in the recollection of hon. members, His Excellency had got into hot water by anticipating that the season would prove a favorable one to the "handicapped" farmers of the hon. member opposite; but, in the speech with which His Excellency had inaugurated the present session he had abstained, and he (Mr. Burt) thought wisely abstained, from any reference to the weather,—a question upon which, he believed, the farmers themselves were not in accord. But beyond this question of the weather, it appeared to him that every matter of importance to the Colony was alluded to in the speech to which they had just listened; and if hon. members devoted their serious consideration to those measures they would do that which the country required of them, and enable them to look back hereafter to the present legislative session as one in which some one or two measures, at any rate, calculated to advance the social and material welfare of the Colony, had passed into law.

The motion for the adoption of an address in reply to His Excellency's speech was agreed to.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. A. O'Grady Lefroy) moved, That a Committee be appointed to draw up the address; such Committee to consist of Mr. Crowther, Mr. Burt, Mr. Steere, Mr. Marnion, and the mover; the Committee to retire immediately.

Motion agreed to.

The Committee retired, and, after a brief deliberation, returned with the address, which was read by the Clerk, as follows:—

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the members of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, in Council

assembled, desire to express our thanks to Your Excellency for the address with which you have been pleased to open the present Session, and we are gratified to learn that you consider the condition and prospects of the Colony are in many respects satisfactory.

We view with pleasure the sound financial position of the Colony, as shewn by the balance in the Treasury Chest on the 30th June last, and the increased Imports and Exports of the Colony for the year 1876. The Estimates to make provision necessary for the requirements of the Public Service will receive our best attention.

We are glad to learn that the works connected with the Geraldton and Northampton Railway are considered by the Director of Public Works to be now in a fair way to completion, and also that Telegraphic Communication will soon be opened by the completion of the Eucla line between this Colony and South Australia.

We recognise the great advantage which the Colony possesses in having secured the services of the steamer "Rob Roy" on our Coast, and we regret to learn that her owners have been disappointed in the amount of traffic at present offering; we however join Your Excellency in hoping that business may so increase as to ensure the steamer's retention on our Coast.

We learn with much satisfaction that the preliminary surveys for the proposed line of Railway from Fremantle to Guildford have been completed, and forwarded with all necessary information to the Secretary of State, and that Your Excellency has been pleased to express a hope that his Lordship will authorise you to proceed at once with this desirable undertaking.

We concur with Your Excellency in thinking that it is advisable that steps should be taken for the representation of the products of the Colony at the forthcoming Paris Exhibition, and we shall be prepared to consider any proposal that may be made by Your Excellency to grant a sum sufficient to meet the necessary Expenditure.

We beg to assure Your Excellency that the Bills and other important questions brought before us will receive our earnest and careful consideration;

and before concluding we avail ourselves of this opportunity of offering to Your Excellency our congratulations on the distinction recently conferred on you by Her Most Gracious Majesty, in promoting you to the rank of Knight Commander of the distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, which we recognize not only as an acknowledgment of Her Majesty's approval of your services, but as complimentary to the Colony over which you preside.

In again thanking Your Excellency for the Address with which you have opened this Session of the Legislative Council, we join you in the prayer that we may be guided by Divine Providence in the faithful discharge of the responsible duties entrusted to us."

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. A. O'Grady Lefroy) moved, That the address be adopted.

MR. STEERE moved, as an amendment, That the consideration of the address be made an order of the day for Wednesday.

Amendment agreed to.

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Wednesday, 11th July, 1877.

First readings—Roads Parties Discipline Bill: second reading—Address in reply: resumed debate.

The SPEAKER took the chair at seven o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

FIRST READINGS.

The following Bills were read a first time:—The District Roads Boards Audit Bill; the Imported Stock Act, 1876, Amendment Bill, 1877; the Industrial Schools Act, 1874, Amendment Bill, 1877; the Confirmation of Expenditure Bill; the Ballot Bill, 1877; and the Extradition Bill, Western Australia, 1877.

ROAD PARTIES DISCIPLINE BILL.

This Bill was read a second time, and passed through committee, without discussion.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

On the Order of the Day for the consideration of the address in reply to His Excellency's speech being read,—

MR. STEERE rose and said: It may appear somewhat inconsistent to the House that, after the statement I made last session, I should, yesterday, have moved the adjournment of the debate on the address in reply; for it may be in the recollection of hon. members—or, if not, they may refresh their memory by referring to our new book, *Hansard*—that I stated to the House that in future it was not my intention to adopt that course, on account of what appeared to me its inutility under our present constitution. But I was given to understand that it was the wish of several hon. members on the present occasion that the course usually adopted at previous sessions should be followed, so I fell in with their views, and moved the adjournment of the debate. I listened with very great attention to the very exhaustive speech delivered to this House by His Excellency yesterday. Of course, I expected that the Governor would take as favorable a view of the condition and prospects of the Colony as possible—we could not expect otherwise: but I must say, I do not share in the views entertained by His Excellency, especially with regard to the financial affairs of the country. I think it is a matter for grave consideration that the actual expenditure of the Colony for the past year exceeded the revenue by £17,484, and that in the year before the the public expenditure was more than £12,000 over and above the revenue for the same period. At this rate, what surplus revenue we had on hand will soon be exhausted. We have been told that on the 31st December last it had dwindled down to £6,000, and if the expenditure goes on at the same rate as at present we shall find at the end of the current year a balance against us, instead of in our favor. We are told in the speech that, on examination of the estimate of Customs revenue for 1878, we shall find that the Government calculate on a further improvement in the revenue from that