

manage the institution, and see that the public funds voted for its support were properly expended. All the great public schools in England, such as Eton, and Rugby, and Harrow, were managed in the same way, by a board of governors. True, those schools were not subsidised by the State, but they had large private incomes at their disposal, and the governing body was not fettered at all by Act of Parliament in the control of the schools. This was just what was proposed to do here. That House, after all, would have an indirect control over the proposed institution, for it voted the funds for its support, and should it be found that the school was mismanaged there would no doubt be such an outcry against the governing body that the Act would probably have to be repealed, or, at any rate, the system of management altered. After all, it was not in contemplation to grant the school any fixed subsidy after the first three years of its existence; it would then have to shift for itself. It was an experiment. With respect to the suggestion that the rules and regulations of the school, as framed by the governors, should be laid on the table of the House, he thought it was a very good suggestion, and, had he thought of it, he would have embodied such a provision in the Bill. This, however, might be done in committee.

The amendment—"That the Bill be read a second time that day six months"—was then put, and negatived on a division, by a majority of five.

Bill read a second time.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS' BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Schedules A, B, C, D, F, and G agreed to; also Schedules H and I; without discussion.

Progress reported, and leave obtained to sit again on Thursday, the 31st August.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Thursday, 31st August, 1876.

The business transacted was of a formal character, the orders of the day being postponed. (*Vide* "Votes and Proceedings," p. 87).

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Friday, 1st September, 1876.

Proxy Voting—Financial Statement—Punishment of Masters of Vessels for taking certain Passengers Bill: second reading—Land Regulations: Report of Select Committee; motion for adoption of Municipal Institutions' Bill: re-committed.

PROXY VOTING.

Mr. RANDELL moved, That an address be presented to His Excellency, praying him to introduce, at the next session of the Council, a Bill to limit proxy voting for members to serve in the Legislative Council to voters residing more than fifteen miles from a polling place, and to such persons who produce a medical certificate of their inability to attend such polling place through sickness or infirmity. Two candidates, the hon. member said, were not equally weighted, under present circumstances, in running the race for legislative honors, and there was a very general feeling adverse to the continuance of the system of proxy-voting, under which a voter living only a stone's throw from a polling place gave his vote by proxy to the candidate calling upon him, instead of attending personally to record his vote. The system was liable to great abuse, and in many cases operated very unfairly towards candidates. He was not at all pledged to the distance of fifteen miles, mentioned in the motion before the House, but he thought there should be some limit fixed. He would have asked the Government to have introduced the system of ballot-voting, but he thought that if the existing system, as it was

adopted at Perth on the occasion of the first election under the present constitution, were carried out in its integrity, it would ensure perfect secrecy. The same plan had not been adopted at subsequent elections, and the circumstance had given rise to considerable complaint. But it was not the system which was at fault; it was the loose mode in which it was carried into effect.

MR. STEERE, in seconding the motion, said there was no doubt whatever of the desirability of regulating the system of proxy-voting as suggested in the proposition of the hon. member for Perth. It would be impossible, without doing injustice to electors, to abolish the system altogether, and some modification, such as was here proposed, would probably meet the case. He concurred with the hon. member (Mr. Randell) that the present system of voting at elections, if properly conducted, ensured perfect secrecy. Motion affirmed.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

IN COMMITTEE.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY: Sir, in bringing forward for the consideration of the committee the Estimates for the year 1877, I would beg to offer a few introductory or explanatory remarks. Sensible as I am of the responsibility that properly attaches itself to an exposition of the financial policy of the Government, I am, however, encouraged in the discharge of that duty by a conviction that the generosity which usually characterises the proceedings of this House will induce hon. members to grant me their kind indulgence. I will, in the first place, call the attention of the committee to a comparative statement of the Colony's exports for the years 1874 and 1875, respectively, and in doing so I would direct special attention to the various items which may be regarded as the staple industries of the Colony. Under the head of sandalwood, the total quantity exported in 1874 was 7,057 tons; last year the number of tons shipped was 6,642 tons, showing a slight decrease on the preceding twelvemonth. Pearls, during the year 1874, were exported to the value of £12,000, and pearl-shells to the estimated value of £62,162, making a total in connection

with this important industry of £74,162. Taking the same items for the year 1875, the export of pearls amounted in estimated value to £12,000, and of pearl shells to £64,642. Under the head of mineral ore, the quantity exported during 1874 was 2,210 tons, of the estimated value of £26,722; last year, the exports under the same head reached 2,498 tons, the estimated value of which is set down as £32,539. Of timber, there was exported 6,912 loads in the year 1874; the number of loads shipped out of the Colony during the past year was 5,717 loads. During 1874 the quantity of wool exported was 2,874,992 lbs., as compared with 2,428,160 lbs. in 1875. Under the head of animals, the number of horses exported in the first-named year was 400; in 1875 the number was considerably decreased, only 197 horses having been shipped. Comparing the total amount of exports for the two years, there is an apparent falling off in 1875 to the extent of £37,169; the total value in sterling of the exports for 1874 being £428,836, and for 1875—£391,217. This decrease, I am disposed to think, is more apparent than real, inasmuch as the quantity of wool alleged to have been exported in 1875 could have hardly been correct, regard being had to the fact that, according to the latest official returns, the number of sheep in the Colony exceeded the number returned for 1874 by 104,000. Taking the average quantity of the clip usually produced, and valuing it at 1s. 6d. per lb., it would, upon this increased number of sheep, give a sum nearly equal to the whole amount of the decrease in exports for 1875 as compared with the preceding year. So, I come to this conclusion:—either there must have been a very considerable mistake in the returns relating to the quantity of wool exported in 1875, or a large quantity of the clip for that year could not have been sent out of the Colony, and was yet available for exportation. I say again, regard being had to the material increase in the number of sheep in the Colony in the year 1875 as compared with the preceding year, and bearing in mind that the average price of wool in both years was about the same—it was, in point of fact, estimated at 1s. 6d. per lb. in each year—there is every reason to believe that the actual

increase of wool produced in 1875 over the quantity yielded in 1874, would, had it been exported, render the total amount of the exports for the past year almost equal to the exports for the preceding year. I will take another test of the soundness of the financial condition of the Colony. The average value of the exports for the three years 1872-3 and 4, was £301,083, whereas the total value of exports last year reached £391,217, showing an increase on the average of the three next preceding years of £90,134. So that, as regards its exports, the Colony, if not actually flourishing, has shown no material signs of diminution. No doubt it is the case that the value of some of the articles of export has fallen off in the market since their value was estimated at the date of their shipment; this may be said to be the case with wool, pearls, and sandalwood. But there are hon. members here who can call to mind, as I myself can, how in years gone by many of our staple articles of export fluctuated seriously in value—especially wool and sandalwood. I have known wool down to a price that it was supposed the result to the sheep-farmer must have been bankruptcy and ruin; and in those days, as in these days, there were prophets of evil who foreboded impending crises, if not inevitable collapse. The Colony did not collapse. The Colony survived the shock. The Colony survived the evil days; the Colony survived the croaking. The clouds that cast a temporary gloom over its prospects were dispelled by the light of better days, which again dawned upon it, and the settlers looked as cheerfully to the future as they had erstwhile looked gloomily. I am quite prepared to admit that at the present moment the prices which our most important articles of export realise in their respective markets are not such as are calculated to keep exporters in high spirits; I will go so far as to say that, just for the moment, they are dishearteningly low. But this fluctuation in market prices does not affect us as materially as it does larger communities; our transactions are small compared with our neighbours' transactions, and we therefore suffer correspondingly less by the fluctuation of markets than they do. That the fall in the price of wool, and of pearls, and the stagnation of the sandalwood trade, must,

temporarily, have a depressing effect upon the Colony and its interests, there can be no doubt; but I firmly and honestly believe that the depression is but transient, and that it will not affect the substantial prosperity of the Colony as some people seem to think it may. Personally, I look forward to the future hopefully, and with a firm belief that the Colony will tide over the present period of depression, and again taste the sweets of prosperity. It so happens that there has recently been discovered upon the islands on the North-West coast of our Colony a deposit of great commercial value, and which will, to a very considerable extent, I trust, counterbalance the depression to which I have alluded. Honorable members are probably aware that I am alluding to the discovery of guano. The Government have received information of the existence on these islands of immense quantities of this valuable deposit, which are variously estimated at between 700,000 and 800,000 tons. If this information be true, then may this discovery of a fresh source of revenue be regarded as opportune indeed. This guano, as hon. members are aware, is of considerable commercial value, and a ready market may be obtained for it not far distant from the Colony. The Government have already taken steps to secure for this country the benefit it ought to derive from this discovery. Arrangements have been made with certain parties with respect to leasing some of these islands; but the desire and intention of the Government is, as soon as the guano has attained a fixed commercial value, that a royalty of so much per ton shall be charged upon all vessels removing it. Hon. members are aware that a Bill has already been introduced to make provision for the punishment of persons who, without a license, shall take away any of this substance. Already, it may be known to some hon. members that a foreign vessel which proceeded to Lacepede Islands, with the view of collecting and carrying away a load of guano, without being duly authorised to do so, has been brought to Fremantle under certain penalties. I think the Colony is to be congratulated upon this discovery of a deposit—almost unlimited in quantity—which may add materially to its revenue. Sir, I will

next proceed to deal with our imports, the total value of which, in 1874, amounted to £364,162, and in 1875 to £349,840, showing a decrease in the past year of £14,322 as compared with the preceding year. I account for this deficiency on the ground that very extensive orders for goods and merchandise were sent to the neighboring colonies, in 1874, and swelled our imports very considerably. During the past year these orders, so far as I can learn, have not amounted to nearly the same value, a large proportion of the previous stock remaining on hand, which to a great extent accounts for the falling off in the revenue from that source in 1875 as compared with the preceding year, with its over-trading. If I again adopt the same test in dealing with our imports as I did when treating of our exports, namely, take the average total value for the three preceding years (1872-3 and 4) and compare this average with the imports for 1875, we shall find a still more gratifying result than was disclosed with regard to the exports. I find that the average value of the Colony's imports for the three years named amounted to £296,082, as compared with £349,840 for 1875, showing an excess of £53,758 in favor of of the year now under review, and demonstrating, to my mind, a steady increase in the commercial transactions of the Colony. With regard to our public debt, hon. members are aware that our present liabilities amount to £135,000, being at the rate of £5 1s. 1d. per head of the population. According to recent advices, the whole of the 1873 loan (£100,000 for railway and telegraph extension in the Champion Bay district) has been floated in the Melbourne market. The balance, which I stated, when making my financial statement last year, had not then been floated, and with regard to which a desire was expressed by some hon. members that it should be raised in the Colony, has since been floated at Melbourne. It was offered here, in accordance with the express wish of certain hon. members, but the only response made was a tender for the purchase of about £400 of debentures; but I am happy to inform the House that it was subsequently taken up in Victoria, at a premium of one per cent., showing at any rate that our credit in the

Melbourne market has not only not fallen off, but, on the contrary, advanced. I next propose to say a word or two with regard to immigration. During 1875 and 1876, there have been introduced 572 immigrants into the Colony from England, and there have been 34 new comers from the neighboring colonies, making the total accretion to our population—606, at a cost of £9,596, or at an average rate of about £15 17s. per head. So far as I can gather from official returns which have been called for and been prepared, the number of persons from amongst those thus introduced who have subsequently left the Colony, is 36. With respect to the Eucla Telegraph, hon. members will, I am sure, hear with satisfaction of the progress of this line—in extent, 750 miles from Albany to Eucla. Of this distance 500 miles have been poled. It has been lately discovered by the Superintendent of Telegraphs, on further examination of the line, that the distance from Point Culver to Eucla is shorter than was at first supposed; it was originally estimated at 146 miles, but it is now believed that the distance is only 110 miles, which will reduce the cost of the construction of the line by about £1,500. The progress of the work has been reported as most satisfactory, and should no unnecessary delay take place, or no unforeseen difficulties arise, the line will be completed to Eucla in about eight months. The total amount of the liabilities incurred in connection with current contracts for the construction of the line, and other expenses, is £38,000. Of that amount there has been provided by a vote of this House a sum of £15,000 for 1875, and £18,000 for 1876, making in all £33,000. Upon the Estimates for the ensuing year, which I am now about to lay on the table, a further vote of £5,000 is set down, which sum, with the amount already voted, it is hoped will be found sufficient to complete the line. I next, sir, come to offer a few words with reference to the revenue. The revenue for 1875, as compared with the revenue for 1874, shows an increase of £6,955 during the past year. The estimated revenue, exclusive of the Imperial grant-in-aid, was £119,200; the actual receipts have amounted to £141,180, showing an increase over the

estimated revenue of £21,980. This augmented income has arisen principally under the head of Customs receipts, the increase from that source, over and above the estimated revenue, being £11,145. Under the head of land sales there has also been an increase of £5,905, and the amount received from land revenue exceeded the sum anticipated by £3,880; showing an increase of £9,785 on the total receipts from land. This is an increase which must be regarded by this House, and by the public, with satisfaction, demonstrating, as it does, how steadily the soil of the country is becoming settled and occupied. There have been large areas of fresh country brought into notice, consequent upon recent explorations, which will be available for future settlement. The increased quantity of land taken up for pastoral purposes in 1875 as compared with the previous year was 2,583,242 acres; and the total revenue for sales and rents of land for 1875 amounted to £33,285—the largest ever received in any one year, and nearly double that received for 1871, the year before the present land regulations came into operation. From this it may be inferred that the amended regulations have very considerably promoted and encouraged settlement of the soil. All this, I maintain, is matter for rejoicing. I now, sir, turn to a statement of the public accounts on the other side of the ledger, and, in the first place, I will institute a brief comparison between the expenditure of the past year and the expenditure during 1874. The net expenditure, as ascertained by audit, for 1875 was £169,230, showing an increase of £25,964 over that of 1874. In this sum is included the first vote of £15,000 for the Eucla telegraph, and £9,800 to provide for interest and sinking fund in connection with the public loan. After providing for the whole expenditure of the year, there remains a balance in the treasury chest of £23,681 to the credit of the Colony. Having thus taken a retrospective glance at the past, I will now, sir, offer a few remarks with respect to the immediate future. The estimated expenditure for the ensuing year, exclusive of the Civil List, the interest on loans, and the necessary provision for the sinking fund, is £155,281, being £3,582 under the expenditure for 1874. There

is a decrease of £13,000 in the vote for the Eucla line of telegraph, but there are increases—unavoidable increases, I may say—under several heads of the expenditure. It was only the other day that I had to ask this House to confirm a considerable amount of expenditure in excess of the grant for the public service last year—a course necessitated by the fact that the estimated expenditure did not prove sufficient to cover the actual expenditure. Guided by past experience, it is proposed to increase the votes on the Estimates for next year, in connection with those departments which showed an unavoidable excess during the past year—a far wiser course, in my opinion, than that of under-estimating the probable expenditure, and having recourse to excess bills. The first proposed increase is in connection with the Postal and Telegraph department, mainly necessitated by the opening up of the Eucla line. Hon. members must be aware that when that line comes into operation there must be additional expenditure involved; stations have to be erected and furnished, and officers must be placed in charge of them; and there are also the expenses connected with the supervision of the line. The Postmaster-General has been asked to furnish the Government with an estimate of the probable sum that will be required for these purposes, and the sum set down by him is £4,542, which is the amount of increase asked under this head. The next estimated increase is in connection with the administration of justice—chiefly with regard to the payment of witnesses and of jurors. The increase asked for under this head is £560. There is also a slight increase in connection with the medical department, necessitated by the increased number of patients seeking admission into hospitals. A sum of £1000 has been placed on the Estimates for furnishing boats for the Harbor Master's department, the present boats being either unserviceable or too dilapidated for repair. Our gaols, too, will necessitate an extra vote; as the number of prisoners increase so must also the cost of their maintenance increase. Hon. members are aware that the Colony has now to bear the expense of maintaining its own prisoners, and it is estimated that an additional £1000 will be required for

this service. There is a slight increase, also, in connection with the native penal establishment at Rottneest, also necessitated in a great measure by the increase in the number of aboriginal prisoners. The sum placed on the Estimates for this establishment is £407 in excess of the vote for last year. Increased expenditure (about £199) is also anticipated in connection with the Government printing establishment, for the purchase of new type and other necessary expenses connected with the department. With regard to the Education vote, it is anticipated that it will have to be considerably augmented, judging from the returns of attendance at the various schools. Whatever some hon. members may say with reference to some teachers not being paid as much as they ought to be, there is this fact staring us in the face;—as the result of enforcing the compulsory clause, the attendance of scholars has so increased that an additional sum of £2,050 has to be placed on the Estimates for the ensuing year, to provide for the payment of teachers. Then again there is the item of Poor House and Charitable Allowances, which seems to be swelling every year, and which does not admit of being cut down, unless indeed we turn a deaf ear to the supplications of the infirm and destitute in our midst. The contemplated increase under this head is £259. Sir, I think I have now sketched out as clearly as possible the various heads under which it is estimated that an increased expenditure will have to be incurred during the next year. The total amount of this increase is £10,572; but, notwithstanding this increase, the estimated total expenditure for the ensuing year will fall £3,582 short of the actual expenditure for 1875. The public revenue up to the 31st July last amounted to £72,125, being £5,730 in excess of the estimated revenue for the same period. So far as the present goes, I think that is a satisfactory condition of affairs. With respect to the future, we must only hope that there will be no cause for serious complaint or apprehension. We do not expect that the revenue will show any actual increase, but, on the other hand, we do not apprehend but that it will equal that of last year. After defraying all the expenses connected with the esti-

mated expenditure up to 31st July last, there remains in the public chest a balance unexpended of £26,119. With reference to this item, it is not usual with me—nor do I wish to do so—to refer in this House to any statements that may be put forward by the public journals; but there have been, in connection with this unexpended balance, statements brought under my notice which appeared in a newspaper published at Fremantle—statements, base as they were unfounded—to the effect that the figures quoted by His Excellency the Governor, in the speech which he delivered at the opening of the present session—relating to the balance remaining in the public treasury on the 31st July—were false and misleading. Sir, I treat such a statement, emanating from such a source, with ineffable contempt. To descend to a level to meet the state of mind of a writer who could conceive such a base insinuation, would indeed involve a departure from self-respect; and I regret the necessity of having to allude to it, with the view of setting the public mind at rest upon the question. The inference deducted by the writer referred to, was, I presume, drawn from the quarterly returns of revenue and expenditure published periodically in the *Government Gazette*. Now, sir, these returns merely show the public receipts and public expenditure for the particular quarter under review, and possibly it may happen that the expenditure in connection with such quarter may actually be greater than the revenue, or *vice versa*. But these returns do not pretend to give a cash account, or to carry on the balance from one quarter to another, or to state the actual balance in the Treasury at the time. This is only exhibited in the Treasury cash-book, where the balance is brought forward from month to month; but it never appears in the Auditor General's quarterly returns. Sir, I now reiterate what His Excellency stated to this House, and what I myself had occasion subsequently to repeat, that the actual balance lying in the public chest to the credit of the people of this Colony, on the 31st July last, was £26,119. I trust the House will be satisfied with that. Sir, in concluding my remarks, I have only to add that the Estimates for the ensuing year have been framed with due regard to the strictest

economy compatible with the exigencies and the efficiency of the public service. There has been no effort on my part—there has been no desire on the part of the Government—to exhibit to this Council an artificial condition of affairs, but rather to set before hon. members, as plainly as possible, what may be considered to be a straightforward representation of the actual position of the Colony, present and prospective. When the Estimates are brought forward in committee, it will afford me much pleasure to offer any further explanation with reference to any item which hon. members may be desirous of information upon. Sir, I beg to move the first item on the Estimates for 1877—"Establishment of "His Excellency the Governor, £261 6s. 8d."

Mr. STEERE thought it would be desirable for the House to resume, so that the financial statement might have some consideration before hon. members entered upon it. He would therefore move, That progress be reported, and leave be given to sit again on Monday.

The motion was agreed to.

PUNISHMENT OF MASTERS OF VESSELS FOR TAKING CERTAIN PASSENGERS BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill to make provision for the punishment of masters of vessels taking certain persons out of the Colony. He said the object of the Bill was to provide for enforcing the terms of an agreement which it was proposed to enter into with immigrants arriving in the Colony at public expense, binding them to remain in the Colony for a term of three years. He thought that, after what had come to the knowledge of the House, as to the number of immigrants who availed themselves of the free passages afforded them to come out here in order to make the Colony a stepping-stone for reaching other colonies, hon. members would see the necessity of introducing such a Bill as the present one. It was a difficult matter to determine what steps should be taken to prevent these men leaving the Colony. If a man made up his mind to quit the Colony, and attempted to do so, all that could be done

with him would be to put him in prison time after time; but that would not meet the object in view. Therefore, it was considered better to render the master of a vessel who took the man away punishable, unless he could prove that he was unaware of the provisions of the Bill. If the master of a vessel, having received due notice with regard to persons who were supposed to be about to take their passage in his ship,—such persons being under agreement with the Government to remain in the Colony for a certain period, and that period had not expired; if the master of a vessel suffered these persons to leave the Colony in his vessel, it was provided in the Bill that, upon conviction, he should forfeit and pay any sum not exceeding £50. He (the Attorney General) could not help thinking that such a provision would have a salutary effect, and, although possibly it would not entirely put an end to the practice of immigrants quitting the Colony while under an engagement, it would no doubt, to a great extent, check this exodus. He would now move that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. STEERE opposed the motion. The Government had already brought in another Bill to attain the same end, but the House did not think it had gone far enough, and certain amendments were proposed which were not acceptable to the Government. That Bill remained in abeyance, and laid dormant until it was revived by himself, and then the Government opposed it. The hon. member Mr. Burt had said, that unless the Government would introduce such a Bill next session he would do so himself. It appeared to him (Mr. Steere) there was great disinclination on the part of the Government to carry out the wishes of the House with regard to the question of the arrest of absconding debtors. The Bill now before the House was a sort of compromise, and he did not think it would ever answer the purpose for which it was designed. How could the master of a vessel be fined while the immigrant was in the Colony, and had not taken his departure? On the other hand, if he had cleared out, and the vessel had gone beyond the jurisdiction of our waters, how could they get at the captain? If the House agreed to the second reading of this Bill, they would not, at the next

session, see such a measure as they wanted to see introduced for dealing with absconding debtors. He thought the provisions of the 34th Victoria, No. 27, afforded ample powers to deal with immigrants leaving the Colony while under an engagement, until such time at any rate as would enable the House to consider the provisions of the Bill which the hon. member Mr. Burt had promised to introduce next session, in the event of the Government failing to do so. It was quite competent for the Government to enter into the contemplated agreement with emigrants, and the terms of that agreement could be enforced under the provisions of an Ordinance already in force. He would move, as an amendment upon the motion for the second reading, that the Bill be read a second time that day six months.

MR. CROWTHER considered the Bill one-sided. It cut very unfairly. It provided that persons about to leave the Colony when in debt to the Government should be arrested, and compelled to remain in the Colony until such debt was paid; but the Bill made no provision for persons leaving the Colony in other people's debt. It appeared to him that the Government were taking a very lively and a very fatherly interest in protecting themselves from being defrauded, but they seemed loth to extend the same protection to other persons. He would have expected, knowing as they did, the wish of the people as expressed over and over again by their representatives in the House, that the Government would have brought forward a Bill more suitable to the requirements of the public than such a measure as this, which appeared to him to be utterly worthless. He would support the amendment.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said the object of the Bill was not to protect the Government, but to secure to the public their just rights. If immigrants were introduced here at public expense, he thought that the public should be protected, and that their money should not be expended in bringing out people to the Colony who merely made it a stepping-stone to reach the sister colonies at the expense of the Western Australian public. The object of the Bill before the House was to

prevent this fraud being practised upon the people of this Colony, and he thought this was a wise and wholesome provision to make. He thought the House would do well to consider how far it would be prudent to oppose the second reading of the Bill. As to providing for the arrest of other absconding debtors, it was considered better that a separate Bill should be introduced, and it would have to be considered how far it would be wise to revert to the system of imprisonment for debt. No such provision could be made or embodied in a Bill like that before the House.

MR. MARMION concurred to a certain extent in what had fallen from the hon. member for Wellington,—that the Bill would not meet the object in view; still, he thought that a new clause might be introduced, or the Bill might be so altered, as to meet the wishes of the House and of the Government. If it was considered desirable to prevent immigrants leaving the Colony as they were doing now, hon. members must agree as to the necessity of legislating with a view to prevent their doing so.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL could not admit that the Bill was utterly worthless. As to the difficulty of enforcing its provisions—which seemed to have some weight with the hon. member for Wellington—it was well known that the majority of masters of vessels returned to the Colony, and a captain who had rendered himself liable to a penalty under this Bill could be proceeded against when he returned. The principle of the Bill was by no means a novel one in this Colony. The 14th Vict., No. 20, enacted that the master of a vessel proceeding to sea with a person whose name he had not given to the proper authorities was liable to a penalty. In an older ordinance, the 4th and 5th Victoria, it was laid down that no person should leave the Colony at all without a certificate under the hand of the Colonial Secretary—a process, he believed, resorted to in order to ascertain that the person who contemplated leaving the Colony was not in debt, and was not leaving a wife and family behind him. So it would be seen that there was nothing novel about the principle of the Bill now before the House. He hoped hon. members would so far agree with its provisions as to

allow its being read a second time, and consent to go into committee upon it; its details might then be modified so as to render the Bill more in accord with the wishes of hon. members.

Motion for second reading agreed to.

LAND REGULATIONS—REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS, in moving the adoption of the report of the select committee appointed to enquire into and report on certain amendments proposed in the land regulations, said the report had been prepared in a fragmentary form, and not in that comprehensive manner which would enable the House to see at a glance what the proposed amendments were. But this course had been adopted as the simpler one, and to avoid the necessity of re-printing the whole of the regulations together with the proposed amendments. With the assistance of a copy of the existing regulations, hon. members would find no great difficulty in understanding the report. He would, however, offer one or two explanatory remarks with regard to the proposed alterations. In the first paragraph of the report the committee had merely expressed their concurrence with the amendments embodied in the report made during the last session, for the sale, letting, and disposal of Crown Lands in the North and East districts of the Colony, the object in view being that runholders in those districts should be put on a much better footing than at present, while, at the same time, the revenue would be correspondingly benefited. He would pass on next to a matter which had engaged his attention for some time, and he regretted that the result of the committee's deliberations had been such as was set forth in the second paragraph of the report. He alluded to the concession of grazing rights to the small farmer, so as to place him in a better position than at present as regards the depasturing of his stock. He regretted much that the terms upon which pastoral leases were now held precluded the granting of these concessions; and this regret the majority of the members of the select committee heartily shared. Passing on to the proposed amendments agreed upon by the select

committee, he came first of all to the preliminary ones, which were merely verbal alterations intended for the better working of the lands department, and which he thought were unobjectionable. The first important amendment proposed was in clause 73 of the present regulations: here it was provided that one class of pastoral lands now in existence should be entirely obliterated. The result of the alteration proposed in the boundary of first class lands would be that second class lands as at present defined would cease to exist as such. Under the new arrangement, all lands not included within the amended boundary, would belong to the second class, the third class being struck out altogether. It was also proposed to make two very important alterations in clause 90—important, at any rate, to the occupiers of pastoral lands. Although a lessee in occupation of his lease was now entitled to claim from the purchaser the fair value of any lawful improvements effected, still, great difficulty was experienced in ascertaining what those improvements were worth, and in determining what was the nature of the improvements in respect of which the lessee could claim. It was now proposed that the onus of proof of the existence of improvements should rest with the lessee himself. It was further proposed that, in the event of any lessee not obtaining on application a renewal of his lease, he shall be entitled to compensation from the Government, or, otherwise, from the person benefiting by such improvements. As the law at present stood, a gentleman might spend a thousand pounds in improvements upon his leasehold, and at the expiration of his lease he was entirely at the mercy of the then existing Governor. He considered the amended regulation a very equitable one to all parties concerned. The next important alteration was that relating to clause 95, which it was proposed to strike out altogether, substituting another in its place. Hon. members were probably aware that under the present regulations the minimum of land which could be taken up on lease for pastoral purposes was 1,000 acres: this was a regulation which, he believed, did not result very advantageously to the men who took up these small squats, and it was considered

by the committee that it would be quite in accordance with the feelings of the small run-holders themselves that the minimum should be raised to 3,000 acres. Provision, however, was made that, where the land applied for was necessarily limited by the interference of the boundaries of other holdings—so that the area contained was less than 3,000 acres—the license might be in accordance with the circumscribed area; but no license would be issued for a less sum than £1. One of the regulations more interfered with than any other was the 103rd—that relating to timber licences. At present, applications for these licences had to be made by the persons who were actually going to engage in felling, cutting, splitting, or removing timber; and would not be granted to any other person in their behalf. It was now proposed that applications for these licences should be entertained when made by an agent or authorised servant; and it seemed to the committee that this was only fair, looking at the fact that the regulations as to timber cutting were to be rendered far more stringent. It was, perhaps, within the knowledge of hon. members that great damage was now done to the timber forests of the Colony by the indiscriminate hewing down of thick trees. In order to place some check upon the present wasteful process, it was proposed that the hewers of timber in baulk, or for piles, should pay a heavier fee for their licences than the cutter or splitter. The hon. member for Wellington would, he was sure, bear him out as to the damage done to our forests at Geographe Bay by the hewers of large piles of timber,—damage of a more destructive nature than if a hundred as many sawyers were carrying on operations there. An immense number of large trees were cut down which were perfectly useless for any other purpose than piles: many of these after being hewn to the ground were found to be deficient for the purpose required, and were left on the ground as so much waste. It was now proposed to impose a heavy additional fee upon licences for hewing, in the hope that the revenue derived from that source would be more in accordance with the extent of damage done by that class of license-holders to the forests of the Colony. There were two other proposed alterations connected with timber

licences; one was that no license should be issued for cutting sandalwood less than nine inches in diameter; and the other was, to legalise the cutting of wattle bark. He was informed by an hon. member interested in the utilisation of wattle bark, that the Colony had lost considerably by the fact of its not being legal to cut down wattle, in the same way as sandalwood. It was imported largely from South Australia and Victoria, and there was no reason why it should not be supplied in the Colony. The bark was largely used for the manufacture of leather in the Colony, and it was therefore proposed to license persons to cut it on the same terms as the sandalwood cutter, namely, 2s. 6d. per month per man, which he considered a very low charge. Passing on from timber regulations, he next came to the regulations affecting mineral lands, with regard to which some little difficulty had arisen. It was the intention of the framers of these regulations that the working of our mineral lands should be encouraged by very liberal laws; on the payment of a small registration fee, a block of two hundred acres of mineral land could be held under lease for a period of two years, in order that it might be properly and thoroughly prospected, and with the intention that, on payment of a fee of £1, the lessee should obtain a right to mine over such land for a period of twelve months, renewable for a further period of twelve months, on payment of a fee of twenty shillings; providing that no individual should hold more than one mining licence at the same time. Now it appeared there were two ways of evading this proviso: in the first place, a man finding he could not hold more than one license had resort to the dummy system, and got his servant or a friend to assist him; in other instances, adventurous prospectors had recourse to the fair sex in order to evade the proviso alluded to. He could instance more than one case in which mining rights were held in the names of ladies, long resident in Western Australia. Now it was never contemplated that this regulation should be abused in that way; and it is now proposed to put a check on this abuse by confining the granting of mining licences to males, so that any enterprising lady who wished to retain such licences must do so through her

husband, or her brother, or her sweetheart. Under the present regulations these licences were renewable for a second year, and it was often the case that they were renewed without any intention whatever to exercise the right to prospect or to mine. It was, therefore, now proposed to add a stipulation, to the effect that the lease should be renewable only if it were shown that the mine was being prospected and about to be worked. If this condition were not complied with, the land would revert to the Crown. He next came to the supplementary regulations, relating to grants of land to immigrants. However much some hon. members might agree with the framers of these regulations, he thought, himself, they were unnecessarily cumbrous. They provided that after two years' residence in the Colony—and not before—an immigrant might select from any unimproved rural Crown lands open to selection, a lot not exceeding 50 acres—thus making it obligatory upon the new arrival to subsist here for two years before he could enjoy the privilege of selection. This regulation it was now proposed to modify. With regard to the provision that no greater quantity of land than 150 acres in all be allotted to any one family, he entirely agreed with it; but, instead of rendering it obligatory upon an immigrant to reside in the Colony two years before he can claim his right of selection, it was now proposed that this right should be exercised within twelve-months after the arrival of the selector. There was also a provision made as to the ages of immigrants entitled to claim. Under the present regulation land could only be selected by adults and by persons between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one,—adults, 50 acres, and juniors of the ages specified, 25 acres. It was now proposed that adults should have the right to select 50 acres; persons between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, 25 acres; and children under such age, if with parents, half that quantity: provided that no greater quantity than 150 acres be allotted to one and the same family. Another proposed amendment was that the occupation certificates allotted to immigrants shall only be deemed transferable in case of the death of the holder; this was done in order to prevent jobbing and the selling of these

certificates. There were four further recommendations embodied in the report, all so clearly expressing the intention of the committee that he saw no necessity to offer any explanatory remarks relating to them. With these observations, he commended the report to the consideration of the House with a feeling that the further settlement of the Colony would be encouraged by the adoption of the proposed alterations, and that some portion of the pastoral, and, to a certain degree, the agricultural interest, would be benefited by their introduction. He must again express his regret at the inability of the committee to do more with regard to the concession of grazing rights to the small farmer than they had been able to do. He begged to move the adoption of the report.

On the motion of MR. SHENTON, progress was reported, and leave obtained to sit again on the following Tuesday.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS' BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Various amendments were proposed by THE ATTORNEY GENERAL to several clauses, and the Bill was re-committed with a view to the introduction of further amendments, which elicited no discussion. [*Vide* "Votes and Proceedings," p.p. 93, 94, and 95.]

Progress reported.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Monday, 4th September, 1876.

Guano Deposits: removal of—Estimates: in committee.

REMOVAL OF GUANO FROM LACEPEDE ISLANDS.

MR. SHENTON, in accordance with notice, Asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands to lay on the table of the House a return showing the number of applications that had been received from persons wishing to remove guano from