

THE SPEAKER then put the question—"That the words proposed to be struck out stand part of the paragraph"—and the House divided with the following result:—Ayes 16; Noes 2.

The amendment was therefore negatived.

The remaining paragraphs were agreed to without discussion, and the address, as amended, adopted.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 9th August, 1876.

Pensions Bill—Printing Bills—Confirmation of Expenditure Bill: second reading—Chairman of Committees—Confirmation of Expenditure Bill: in committee.

PENSIONS BILL—PRINTING BILLS.

MR. STEERE, with leave, introduced a Bill to regulate and abolish pensions in certain cases, and the Bill having been read a first time the hon. member moved, That it be printed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said he could hardly conceive that the House had the power to order the printing of Bills, introduced by private members, at the Government Printing Office.

MR. STEERE said that the office had been established mainly for the purpose of printing documents connected with the Legislative Council, and he was surprised that any hon. member should think of objecting to a Bill, of a public character, being printed at the Government Office.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL was fully aware that, in the House of Commons, Bills were ordered to be printed; but there they had the necessary appliances and machinery for doing so. If the hon. member for Wellington requested that his Bill be printed at the Government Office, there was not the slightest doubt that his request would be complied with; but he could hardly conceive that the Government was under an obligation to print a Bill simply because the House ordered it to be printed.

MR. STEERE had never heard such an absurd objection in his life.

MR. BROWN said that ever since he had been a member of the House, Bills brought forward by private members had invariably been treated in precisely the same way as Government measures, and the right to have them printed at the Government Printing Office had never been questioned before. He thought it a most unreasonable objection. It was not at all fair towards hon. members that they should be obliged to go to private firms to have public Bills printed at their own private expense, when there was an exceedingly costly establishment maintained at public expense for the purpose of printing all papers connected with the public service which it might be deemed desirable to print. If the objection raised by the hon. The Attorney General went so far as to say that it should not be done, he (Mr. Brown) thought the House would very soon find a way to compel it.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL thought the hon. member for Geraldton had not understood what he had said. He had never asserted for a moment that if the House expressed a desire that any document should be printed, the Government would not at once accede to the wishes of hon. members. What he had said was, that he thought it was really not within the competence of the House to order the Government Printer to print Bills introduced by private members.

MR. STEERE: I contend that it is.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the Government Printer were to refuse to do so, I apprehend the House would be at a loss to know how to compel him.

MR. STEERE: We would not vote the necessary supplies; that's all.

MR. BURGESS was very much surprised indeed to hear the expression of opinion which had emanated from the Attorney General with regard to the matter before the House. He (Mr. Burgess) maintained that every member of that Council had a right to bring forward such Bills as he might think proper, and it was not more than they should expect that those Bills should be printed by the Government Printer. If not, then they had no business in that House at all, and were he refused permission to print a Bill at the Government Office he would resign at once.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said, so far as the Government

was concerned, the discussion which had taken place on this point was mere waste of time. He thought there could be no objection—the Government would make no objection—to the printing of Bills introduced by hon. members. When he said that, he did not enter into the question as a matter of right. But there certainly could be no objection to any Bills being printed at the Government Office, once they were received by that House.

MR. RANDELL supported the position taken up by the hon. member for Wellington, and expressed surprise that the hon. The Attorney General should have even hinted that there was any doubt in the matter. In the case of private Bills, he could quite understand an objection being raised to their being printed at public expense; but no such objection existed with regard to Bills of a public character, although introduced by private members. He thought the sooner it was understood that the House had this right, the better.

MR. STEERE would refuse to accept as a favor or concession what he conceived to be a right belonging to the House—a right based on parliamentary precedence and privilege. If the House were denied this right, it would very soon show the Government that the Printing Establishment maintained at public expense was not kept up for the special behoof of the three hon. members opposite. It was even provided in their Standing Orders that every Bill ordered to be read a first time should be printed with as little delay as possible, which, of course, meant in the Government Printing Office. He was sure the Attorney General had taken up a position which would not be approved by His Excellency the Governor, who had frequently told him (Mr. Steere) that every facility would be afforded private members in this respect. The Government Printer had no business to go to the Government for orders in connection with printing for that House, but to the Speaker.

The matter then dropped.

CONFIRMATION OF EXPENDITURE BILL.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY then rose to move the second

reading of the Bill to confirm the expenditure for the services of the year 1875, beyond the grant for that year. He entered into a full explanation of the various items of excess, commencing with the item "Civil List Schedule, £6 11s. 8d." This increase arose from a portion of the half salary of the Chief Justice for 1874 (while His Honor was in England) having been paid in 1875. There was no actual excess of salary. The next item was "Colonial Secretary, £66 13s. 1d.," which arose out of an additional supply of firewood for the various Government Offices, it being deemed expedient to provide a large stock while procurable rather than have to seek it when possibly it would not be easily obtainable. There was now a considerable stock of wood on hand available for future consumption. He next came to the item "Surveyor General, £2282 15s. 3d.," mainly caused by the increase in the item of contingencies for contract surveying. Hon. members were aware that this was an item which it was impossible to estimate correctly, or indeed, approximately; and he need hardly point out how injurious it would be to the public interests were these surveys crippled or postponed simply because the vote passed for that service was found to be inadequate. An immense area of pastoral land to the eastward, discovered in the course of recent explorations, had been surveyed, and, as settlement increased, must produce a marked effect upon the progress and prosperity of the Colony. Extensive surveys had also been carried out in the Victoria and Nickol Bay Districts, which, had the Government not anticipated the vote of the House, would have still remained to be done—a drawback which would have led to much embarrassment and in the end prove very detrimental to the public interests. The next item was that of "Customs Department, £89 10s. 6d.," expended on account of the revenue cutter, being an increase in the item of contingencies in connection with that vessel, which could not have been foreseen. He next came to the item "Postal and Telegraph Department, £661 5s. 4d.,"—principally on account of the conveyance of the overland mail to Albany. In 1874 contracts were called for this service, inasmuch as it was found that by despatching the Colonial Mails

by the "Georgette" they arrived too late at the Sound for transmission by the English steamer to the Colonies. The overland service, therefore, became a necessity, consequent upon a change in the P. & O. Company's time table, and this item had been expended on account of that service. The next item was that under the head of "Administration of Justice, £1,236 8s. 5d.," being increased expense in connection with the payment of jurors and witnesses—an unavoidable increase. The vote for this purpose having proved inadequate, entailed the excess here provided for. In the next item, "Medical Department, £1,295 0s. 11d.," there was likewise an unavoidable increase, which could not possibly have been anticipated. In the various district hospitals throughout the country, as well as at the Colonial Hospital in Perth, as patients presented themselves the Government found it impossible to refuse them that medical aid which they required. As population increased, and, with the revolving years, old age and infirmity came on, the number of afflicted persons applying for relief must increase correspondingly; and, though every care and precaution was taken that medical aid should not be given other than when the state and condition of a patient pointed him out a subject deserving of relief, still this item had, as would be seen, considerably exceeded the vote appropriated by the House for that purpose. A considerable proportion of this item, however, had been refunded by patients who, under an agreement entered into on admission, were obliged to pay for their maintenance while in hospital; so that in reality the excess was not so great as it appeared to be. The next item was, "Police, £994 6s. 7d.," incurred in connection with the remount of horses, travelling expenses, and forage. The latter was an item which it was almost impossible to estimate beforehand, consequent upon the fluctuation of prices. Two-thirds of this excess of expenditure, however, was provided for out of Imperial Funds, leaving only one-third to be paid out of the Colonial chest. He next came to the item "Gaols, £1,813 14s. 8d.," with reference to which also it might be said that it was impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy the amount that would be required in the course of any given year. As

the number of prisoners increased, so of course, would the cost of their maintenance increase. A portion of this amount had been expended on account of Imperial prisoners in charge of the police, *en route*, which amount had been refunded from the Imperial chest. In connection with Rottneest Native Penal Establishment there was an excess, over the estimated expenditure, of £857 11s., mainly caused by the item "provisions and other necessaries for native prisoners," and in providing firewood for the saltworks in operation on the island. There were now between 80 and 100 aboriginal native prisoners at the penal establishment—a much larger number than usual. With regard to the item of firewood, the same object had actuated the Government in laying in a good stock as had induced them to provide wood for the public offices; he might add that, of this item, a considerable proportion returned to the Colonial chest on account of salt sold at the works. The next item, "Poor House and Charitable Allowances, £1010 8s. 8d.," was the result of increased pauperism. This was an item which had not only increased during the past year, but continued to increase, and was likely to do so, unless, indeed, they were to allow people to wander about in a condition of wretchedness and misery. Any hon. member who chose to visit the Invalid Depot under Mount Eliza would there see the extent of the misery, the infirmity, and utter helplessness which this item tended to alleviate. The strictest inquiry was made into each individual case, through the Resident Magistrates, the Police, and the Relieving Officer, and care was taken that no imposition was practised upon the public. He next came to the item of "Education, £1377 0s. 8d." incurred by the additional earnings of teachers under the result system,—a satisfactory refutation of the reports circulated through the medium of the newspapers that the emoluments of schoolmasters, under the existing system, have decreased. Under the head of "Roads and Bridges" there was an excess of £486 14s. 3d., caused by sundry miscellaneous repairs executed by the Government on the Albany road, in order to keep the same in a state fit for the conveyance of the overland mail and for general traffic. The next item was, apparently, a somewhat portentous one—"Miscellaneous, £7479

1s. 4d." The greater portion of this sum (£3934 4s. 2d.) was expended in connection with the Eucla Telegraph Line, and was merely anticipatory of a vote of the House for that purpose—a course pursued with the view of facilitating this important work and avoiding all possible delays in carrying it out to completion. The various other items which went to swell up the excess under the head of "Miscellaneous" were as follows:—telegraph materials for general service, £347 19s. 6d.; stationery for general service throughout the Colony (of which there was a large stock on hand), £866 9s. 10d; interest on Savings' Bank deposits—a very satisfactory item, £189 1s. 4d.; sandhills at Geraldton, £147 1s. 1d.; quartz crushing, £54 10s. 6d.; balance due to Electro-Magnetic Telegraph Co., (to complete the purchase of the line), £182 9s. 4d.; sericulture, £183 12s. 7d; (No amount had been placed on the Estimates under the last-mentioned head, but the Government had deemed it wise not to allow an industry to languish in its experimental stage for want of funds. A large quantity of silk and cocoons had been sent to Europe to be tested, and there was every reason to believe that the result would be highly encouraging. The amount here set down included a sum expended in the erection and fitting up of a magnanerie on the mulberry plantation at Claisebrook.) Volunteer corps, £359 3s. 2d.,—clothing for mounted volunteers and Pinjarrah corps, (refunded to the general revenue); £150 towards the erection of building and purchase of site for Working Men's Hall, Perth; struts for telegraph posts, on the Champion Bay line, to secure the posts against winter floods, £179 10s.; and expenses on account of Mr. Forrest's expedition, provided for in 1873, but not drawn until 1875—£762 19s. 3d. Those were the various items comprised under the head of "Miscellaneous." The next item in the bill before the committee was "Refunds, £785 2s. 9d.," which in reality was not an excess, being caused principally on account of drawbacks on customs duties in connection with supplies for the Convict Department. The last item was that under the head of "Special"—£2056 10s. 11d., which, actually, could not be regarded as an excess. It was a payment from the general revenue to meet increased expenditure

under the Loan of 1872, £800 of which was sanctioned by resolution of the Legislative Council; the transfer of balance on account of the same in the hands of the Crown Agents (£1,244 9s. 3d.); and salaries to the issuers of pearling licenses at Sharks Bay (£12 1s. 9d.). He had now enumerated the various items which constituted the overdraft for 1875, which in the aggregate amounted to £22,498 16s.—apparently a very large sum, but which in reality was not so. When explained, if the underdrafts on the estimated expenditure were deducted—amounting to £5,808 1s.,—it would reduce the overdraft to £16,690 9s. 11d., and if he again deducted from this amount the sum expended on the Eucla Telegraph line £3,934—a work authorised by the House; the £800 to meet increased expenditure under the Loan of 1872 (also sanctioned by a resolution of the Legislative Council); the sum £764, the expenses incurred on account of Mr. Forrest's expedition (provided for in 1873); and the balance due to the Electro Magnetic Telegraph Company, £182, the purchase of whose line was authorised by the Legislature;—deducting these items from the reduced overdraft, further decreased it by £5,681, and brought it down to £11,000. This excess was principally made up of unavoidable expenses incurred under the heads of administration of justice, £1,236; hospitals, &c., £1,295; gaols, £1,813; charitable allowances, £1,010; increase of teachers' salaries, £1,377,—all of which excesses are beyond the control of the Government. These items amounted in the aggregate to £6,732, which, deducted from the reduced overdraft of £11,000, left the actual excess at a little over £4,000. If from that sum, again, be deducted the sum paid on account of contract surveys—for service actually performed, and from which the Colony would derive material benefit—the overdraft would be still further reduced by a sum of (in round numbers) £2,000; so that, in reality, the actual amount of overdraft was not more than about £1,900—a sum which could hardly be regarded as excessive, bearing in mind that the Estimates were merely an approximate calculation. He would not trespass longer on the patience of the House; should any hon. member desire any further information on any item he would willingly give it. In

conclusion, he had the satisfaction to announce that, after meeting the whole amount of excess provided for in the Bill before the House, there remained, to the credit of the public, in the Treasury chest, on the 31st December, 1875, a sum of £23,681 12s. He would now move that the House go into committee on the Bill.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

MR. SPEAKER: Before the House goes into committee upon the Bill, it is necessary that a Chairman of Committees be appointed. Previous to my departure for England I discharged the duties of Chairman as well as of Speaker, and during my absence the hon. member for Albany was elected to perform those duties. I would suggest that the hon. baronet be again requested to accept the office of Chairman of Committees of the whole House.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY: I propose, with much pleasure, that Sir Thomas Campbell be elected Chairman of Committees. I think that all hon. members will agree with me, as they did last session, that there is no member of this House who will fill the duties more efficiently. When the hon. baronet consented to accept the office last session, I believe it was merely until the end of the then current session; but I do hope that, in consideration of the valuable services he would give to this House by again consenting to occupy a position which he has already so worthily filled, the hon. baronet will be induced to resume the duties of Chairman of Committees during the present session.

MR. STEERE: It affords me great pleasure to second the proposition before the House. I am quite certain that every member will agree with me that the strict impartiality and dignified courtesy displayed by the hon. baronet in the discharge of the duties last session proved him to be eminently fit for occupying the responsible position of Chairman of Committees. I do hope the hon. gentleman will again accede to the request of the House—a hope which I am sure will be shared by every hon. member of this Council.

SIR THOMAS CAMPBELL: Had I followed my own inclination, of course I should not have accepted the office last

session, nor would I do so now, for when a man gives up his time, and at considerable personal inconvenience comes to this House to take part in its deliberations as the representative of an important constituency, and finds that by accepting the office of Chairman of Committees he is to a great extent debarred from taking part in the proceedings, one naturally feels a disinclination to undertake the duties you have asked me to perform. My constituents, I know, will not very much like it. I am, however, aware that someone must accept the office, and it would be hard to ask Mr. Speaker to discharge the duties of Chairman in addition to the onerous and important duties of his present office. Moreover, it has been brought to my notice that I am liable to be taken into custody by the Sergeant-at-Arms if I do not comply with the wishes of the House. Under these circumstances, I am ready to accede to those wishes.

CONFIRMATION OF EXPENDITURE BILL.

IN COMMITTEE:

Item: *Surveyor General's Department*, £2,282 15s. 3d.

MR. STEERE, while acknowledging that a great deal of this money had been very judiciously expended in contract surveys, really thought that when they saw the vote for this department increasing from £5,000 in 1875 to £7,000 in 1876, and they had now again to meet an expense of £2,282, it was due to the House that it should receive some further explanation on the subject. He thought it might surely be conceived, approximately at any rate, what the expenditure in connection with surveys would be during the year—he did not mean within a £100 or so, but certainly within less than the amount of the overdraft now presented to them. He observed among the details of departmental expenditure for the past year a sum of £475,—amount of expenses incurred in the search for coal, conducted by the Rev. C. G. Nicolay. That, in his opinion, was an expenditure that should never have been incurred without the sanction of the House. It could not be regarded in any way as a necessary expenditure, or that the question to be solved was one of immediate or pressing

importance. Nor had any beneficial result to the Colony accrued from the labors of the expedition. He considered it was most unjust towards the public for the Government to incur such an expenditure without the sanction of the House, merely to carry out some whim of a particular member of the Government. He would move that the excess vote for the Survey Department be reduced by the amount of the sum expended in connection with this fruitless expedition.

The COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS, in explanation, said that arrangements for carrying on the expedition had been made, or at any rate entered upon, by the late Administration, and such being the case the work was authorised by the present Government, and it was thought proper to charge the expenses of the search to the Survey Department. He could but allow that if the House had been consulted in the matter at the time, it would at any rate have been some satisfaction to hon. members to have known the probable cost of the expedition. Still he could not but conceive that the expenditure was justified, under the circumstances; for the present Government could not, in good faith, do otherwise than ratify and carry out an arrangement made by a previous Administration. The work was well and carefully executed, and though the results obtained were not such as those who were sanguine in the matter had anticipated, or rather hoped for, still much valuable information had been obtained, and the work was well worth the money. Had the party been successful in discovering coal, the House would no doubt have been glad to confirm the vote and applaud the action of the Government in the matter; and he did not think that simply because no satisfactory results had arisen out of the search it altered the aspect of the case.

MR. BURGESS considered that the amount of £2,282 under the head of the Surveyor General's Department was certainly a large excess of expenditure over the estimated expenditure, and he thought it would be satisfactory to the members of that House, and to the outside public, if the Surveyor General were to explain how much of this amount had actually been expended upon surveys.

The only extensive surveys he was aware of having been conducted during the past year was the survey carried on in the Northern district, in the neighborhood of Nickol Bay: beyond that, he did not know of any extensive surveys having been undertaken, and he thought it would be well that the House should be placed in possession of some further information on the point.

THE SURVEYOR GENERAL said, objection had been taken last session with respect to his report on Crown Lands and Surveys, it being alleged that the report in question was not explicit enough. In order to guard himself against such a charge this session, he had gone to considerable trouble in the preparation of a somewhat elaborate report on the working of the Land and Survey branches of his department. That report had been laid on the Table of the House, and was in possession of hon. members, and he must say it was somewhat disheartening and disappointing to find that the hon. member for the North had not looked at it. Had the hon. member glanced at the returns (Nos. 14, 15, and 16) embodied with that report, he would have found not only every penny of the excess vote accounted for, but details showing the manner in which it had been expended, to whom paid, the districts where the work was executed, and every particular connected with the vote. With regard to the remarks that had fallen from the hon. member for Wellington relative to the increased expenditure connected with the Survey Department, he might say that the principal item under which this increased expenditure had arisen was the survey and triangulation of the Nickol Bay district, conducted by Mr. Alexander Forrest, at an expenditure of £1,223. When that work was commenced, he (the Surveyor General) did not meditate an expenditure of more than half that amount; but the demands made by the settlers of the district were so urgent that he directed Mr. Forrest to carry out as much of the work as he could, and he believed that a great deal of satisfaction had been given. Another expenditure which had been contracted earlier than he had anticipated was the triangulation of the country between Rockingham and Champion Bay, which, as would be seen from the report in the possession of hon.

members, had cost a considerable sum of money. Another work in connection with which increased expenditure was incurred, was the survey in connection with the Eucla Telegraph Line. But for the unfortunate wreck of the *Mary Ann*, having the charts on board, he would now have been in possession of much necessary information relative to the country extending between Bremer Bay and Esperance Bay. The expenditure incurred in connection with this survey would soon recoup itself, for a great number of applications for land in that vicinity had already been made. In addition to these extra items of expenditure, there was also the expenditure incurred in connection with the search for coal, which, as he had already said, it had been thought proper to charge to the Survey Department. With regard to the manner in which the various surveys connected with his own department had been carried out, and the strictness exercised to guard against any unnecessary expenditure, and fuller details as to the various items of expenditure incurred, he begged to refer hon. members to the report already laid on the Table.

MR. BURGESS expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the explanation offered by the Surveyor General. His only object in asking for information was with a view to afford the public, through the medium of the press, an opportunity of seeing how the increased expenditure had been incurred.

MR. PADBURY said it was no use crying over spilt milk, and he hoped, the next time the Government spent £475 in searching for coal, they would be fortunate enough to find it. With reference to the Survey Department, he had got himself into hot water in connection with it last year; he had led the attack and poor old Mr. Bickley had followed him up, and he had no intention of renewing the battle this year. There was one question, however, which he would like the Surveyor General to answer. He was informed that a very large amount of money had been paid, and was being paid to surveyors in the Northern district for fixing the boundaries of settlers' runs. Now he did not know whether this was being done at the public expense, by Government surveyors, or not; if so, he did not think it was just to the settlers in other districts

of the Colony. He knew very well that he himself had to pay for getting his boundaries defined.

THE SURVEYOR GENERAL: It is not done at the public expense.

MR. BROWN expressed his surprise that the expedition in search of coal had been organised and sent out without the sanction of the House, even although no provision had been made for it in the Estimates. In his opinion, the Government should not think of spending such a large sum of money upon any scheme which was not of very pressing and urgent necessity, without the sanction of the Legislature. It could not be said that this work was urgent, or that the question of coal or no coal was one so pressing for immediate solution that it could not be allowed to remain in abeyance until the Legislative Council assembled. He had no hesitation in saying that it ought to have been held over until the Legislature met, so that the sense of the House might be taken on the matter. He did not suppose that the hon. member for Wellington was really in earnest in proposing that the vote be struck out, his object being rather to show the disapprobation of the House at the course pursued by the Government in the matter, and, so far, he (Mr. Brown) was altogether in accord with the hon. member. The mere fact of the expedition not having proved successful was a point upon which he placed no weight, but the principle involved in the action of the Government was a reprehensible one.

MR. STEERE said his object in moving that the item be disallowed was, as the hon. member for Geraldton had hinted, to show his disapproval of the course pursued by the Executive in organising an expedition involving an expenditure of hundreds of pounds without the leave or consent of the Legislature. It would be perfectly nonsensical to press his motion, unless he proposed a distinct resolution that the money should come out of the pockets of the hon. the Surveyor General himself. He had no intention of doing that, and would therefore withdraw the motion, having now obtained an expression of opinion by the House on the point involved.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said he quite concurred in the observation that the public funds should

not be expended other than with the sanction of that House, and, in the case referred to, the expenditure had been incurred by a former Administration and not by the present Government.

Item: *Customs Department*, £89 10s. 6d.

MR. STEERE understood that this increase arose on account of contingent expenses in connection with the Revenue Cutter. It would be in the recollection of some hon. members that at the last session of the Council the question of giving the principal officer in charge of this cutter half-pay while on shore, and not actively employed, was discussed in the House, and it was agreed that he should receive half-pay, under the circumstances. He (Mr. Steere) was now informed that the officer in question had not been receiving half-pay, because the hon. the Colonial Secretary had no recollection that the House had expressed a desire to that effect.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was so. He remembered the matter being discussed in the House, but he was not aware that any specific resolution had been adopted, nor any positive wish expressed, that the officer in question should receive half-pay when not actively employed at sea.

MR. MARMION said such a wish had been expressed, and though, possibly, there was nothing placed on record with regard to the matter, it was at the request of the hon. gentleman himself (the Acting Colonial Secretary) that this was not done. He believed the hon. gentleman made some sort of a promise to the hon. member for Wellington and to himself (Mr. Marmion) that the matter would receive the consideration of the Government, and that there was very little doubt the officer in question would receive his half-pay.

MR. BURGESS recollected the matter being before the House last session, and an opinion was expressed that the Government had not dealt fairly with the officer alluded to, who, for a considerable time, had been kept idle, and at a good deal of personal expense, entirely for the convenience of the Government. He (Mr. Burgess) had thoroughly understood that the officer in question would be compensated for his loss of time.

MR. BROWN said he had been one of

the prime movers in the matter, and he remembered distinctly that the Colonial Secretary, after a great deal of discussion, informed the House that there would be no necessity to propose or adopt any definite motion, but that steps would be taken—now that the sense of the House had been ascertained—to give effect to the wishes of hon. members, and that the officer referred to would receive half-pay from the time of his discharge until he went on board again.

MR. RANDELL was under the same impression, and was surprised to find no reference made to the matter in the "Votes and Proceedings" of the House.

MR. STEERE was sure it would afford satisfaction to the members of the House if the Colonial Secretary would give them some assurance that this matter would receive the attention of the Government, and that the wish of the House should be carried out. Although jealous of the expenditure of public money, the House did not wish to deal hardly with officers whom it deemed entitled to consideration; and he thought this was a case in point. He thought the master of the Government Revenue Cutter ought to be placed on the same footing as naval officers, who, when not employed in active service on board ship, received half-pay.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said, that to prevent any question with regard to the future, if the House would agree to have it recorded in the minutes of the proceedings that such was the feeling of the House in the matter, he was sure there would be no objection on the part of the Government. So far as his personal recollection went, it had quite escaped his memory that such a wish was expressed by the House last session; he had been under the impression that the question had been left for further consideration. No one would more happily give a public servant what was his due than himself; but the question was, whether the officer in question was only appointed to the command of one particular vessel, and that when that vessel was sold and his services were dispensed with, the public chest should be charged with his pay while his services were not required. However, if a definite motion were affirmed by the House and recorded on the minutes, expressive of its wish that the officer in question should

receive half-pay during the period he was on shore, there would be no opposition; he was sure, offered on the part of the Government.

MR. STEERE intimated that he would move a resolution to that effect on the following day.

Item: *Medical Department*, £1295 0s. 11d.

MR. STEERE—alluding to the fact that £100 had been allowed for the passage of a medical assistant, or dispenser, for the Colonial Hospital—asked if it was right that the Colony should be called upon to contribute so large a sum towards the passage of every petty official coming here from England. Was it right that a first-class passage by the overland route should be given to every fellow coming out to fill an appointment in the public service, no matter how inferior and unimportant the office? He was aware that a resolution had been passed authorising the Crown Agents to allow £100 for the passage of gentlemen appointed at home to the public service of the Colony, but surely it was never meant that it should apply to all cases. They might next find a messenger for a Government office coming out as a first-class passenger in a P. & O. boat. Was the service of the gentleman alluded to so urgently required that it was necessary that he should travel by the expensive overland route?

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said there was a pressing necessity for the appointment; there being no resident medical officer at the Colonial Hospital at the time. The Colonial Surgeon could, of course, not be expected to discharge the duties, and it was that gentleman who had suggested that a qualified officer should be sent from England to fill the office of house surgeon at the hospital. It was an exceptional case, and one of pressing urgency.

MR. BURGESS said that many men went into the hospitals maintained at public expense, and were there restored to health, and on coming out earned good wages. He thought that in such cases they ought to be made to contribute to their maintenance while under treatment. He was afraid that the authorities in some districts had not been quite so strict in this respect as they ought to be, and that it would be well if the Govern-

ment directed the attention of the officers in charge of district hospitals to the matter, with a view to compel all patients who were accommodated there at public expense to repay, if they were able, the cost of their maintenance.

MR. MARMION said it struck him as strange how year after year this item of "Medical Establishment" kept on increasing. Referring to the Blue Books from the year 1872 to the year 1875, he found that in the first-named year the vote under this head was £3,682, being an increase of £414 on the next preceding year. In 1873, the expenditure under the same head was £4,378; in the following year, it reached £5,444; and, last year, £6,122. He could not understand this increase, year after year. If it arose from increased pauperism, it disclosed a very sad state of affairs; and if the expenditure augmented at the same ratio for the next five years, the Colony would be saddled with a very heavy charge. Probably, there was no help for it, but it certainly disclosed a most lamentable state of things. In saying this, he did not mean to say that our hospitals were not conducted with economy, but the expenditure was becoming a very serious item.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY, said, with reference to the remarks of the hon. member for the North (Mr. Burges), he could assure the House that the attention of the Resident Magistrates in the various districts had been most particularly directed to the matter of seeing that patients who were found to be able to repay the cost of their maintenance in hospital should in all instances do so; and he believed that every precaution was taken to prevent imposition. In many cases, agreements were made with the masters of patients entering hospital to undertake to refund the cost of the maintenance of a servant restored to health at the public expense. Where any possible means existed to obtain repayment of the cost of a patient's treatment and accommodation, every effort was made to secure re-payment.

MR. BURGESS said he had himself known able-bodied men in the Victoria district discharged from hospital who were never asked to contribute towards their maintenance at all.

MR. RANDELL thought hon. members

should bear in mind that in other communities there were institutions of this character supported by voluntary contributions in addition to those provided by the State; and he thought it spoke somewhat favorably for this Colony that it had not yet found any necessity for supporting such institutions by voluntary effort. It was no doubt a melancholy and painful fact to find that disease was on the increase, but looking at the fact that we had an exceptional population, so far as one particular section of the community was concerned, he did not think that such a state of things was more than could be expected. He would be very sorry to think that what had been said with regard to the vote for the medical establishment that evening should induce the officers in charge of the hospitals throughout the various districts of the Colony to be too strict in dealing with applications for admission. At the same time he thought every effort should be made to obtain payment for their maintenance from every patient who could afford it.

Item: *Rottmest Native Penal Establishment*, £857 11s.

MR. PADBURY called attention to the manner in which native prisoners were treated on their discharge from the penal establishment. Some of these men belonged to distant parts of the Colony, and on their discharge they had to get back the best way they could, and through districts inhabited by hostile tribes. He thought the Government should afford them some protection, and see that they safely returned to that part of the Colony to which they belonged. The native penal establishment did not appear to be self-supporting, but on the contrary was carried on at very considerable expense to the public; and he thought it worthy of consideration whether it would not be wise and judicious if some of these aboriginal convicts were allowed to enter the service of the settlers, under the assignment system, care being taken that they should only enter the employment of persons from whom they might expect and receive humane treatment.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said no doubt such a system, if it could possibly be carried out, would be a very good one, but there were many difficulties in the way of its adoption. It

must not be forgotten that these natives were prisoners, undergoing various periods of imprisonment, and he would like to know how the settlers could prevent them escaping from their service,—unless indeed they worked them in gangs, and in irons, with a supervisor.

MR. BROWN called attention to the great waste of public money which bringing down native prisoners all the way from Nickol Bay, and other distant parts of the Colony, involved. It would be far better to let these men remain in the district where they resided, and be there employed on the roads, under a warder. The practice alluded to by the hon. member for Swan, of allowing discharged natives to return to their districts without assistance or protection, was cruel and indefensible.

MR. BURGESS fully endorsed the views of the hon. member for Geraldton as to the advisability of employing native prisoners in the districts to which they belonged—when remote from head quarters—rather than incur the enormous expense entailed annually in bringing them from a distant settlement like Nickol Bay. The settlers would be very glad indeed if such an arrangement could be carried out. It would not only be a boon to the district, but also a considerable saving to the general revenue, and, probably, more efficacious from a reformatory point of view as regarded the natives themselves. He hoped the Government would take the matter into their most serious consideration.

Item: *Poor House and Charitable Allowances*, £1,010.

MR. PADBURY thought this sum would suffice to send fifty of the infirm paupers and old men now maintained in the Dépôt at Mount Eliza, home to their own parishes in the mother country; and he thought the best thing the Government could do would be to give them £20 each to pay their passages and get done with them.

Item: *Miscellaneous*, £7,479 1s. 4d.

MR. BURGESS suggested that, in future, this item should be given more in detail, and not lumped up in one sum, which was very unsatisfactory to the public outside.

MR. RANDELL pointed out that if the hon. member would refer to the "Comparative Statement of Revenue and

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