

of commissioners, must necessarily contain certain anomalies; and I am pleased to find that we will have an opportunity of dealing with those defects, and at the same time of seeing that the rights and privileges of the public servants are properly conserved. Notice has been given this evening of a motion on the subject of the limitations as to age and height imposed by the law with regard to persons entering the public service; and I must say that it seems most absurd that because one man is one year older, or an inch shorter than another, he is in consequence to be deprived of the opportunity of obtaining employment from the State. The Governor's speech alludes to the great benefit which the State educational system, established in 1872, has been to the people of this colony. So highly is that benefit appreciated that I am sure the people will never allow any tampering with the three main principles of the Education Act. I trust, however, that the "cram" system, which is a corollary to the "result" system, will soon be abolished; and that thus our educational agency may be made more perfect, and its cost, if possible, reduced without affecting the main principles of the Act. The principle of land endowment for educational purposes is one which meets with the approval of my constituents; and I believe if similar provision were made to meet the expenditure connected with our defences and charitable institutions it would command general approbation. There is an absence from the Governor's speech of any allusion to an alteration of the rules regulating the procedure of this House. Probably that is because the matter applies to the Legislative Assembly alone. However, I trust that the Government will deal with the question carefully, so that while our rules may be altered to facilitate the conduct of public business, the individual rights of honorable members will not be sacrificed. Certainly, this House should jealously guard the privileges possessed by the representatives of the people. For some time past the Samoan question has been before the public; and I submit that that question is one which deserves our attention. Very properly, public men in Victoria have united with public men in the other colonies in the endeavour to preserve the islands in the neighbouring seas from any foreign power; and although we are not yet acquainted with the result of the deliberations of the international conference at Berlin, yet it is very gratifying to us to learn that British interests, which include our

own, will not be made subsidiary to those of any other power. With regard to another important question, I believe the Government have but spoken the wish of the people of this colony in expressing to the people of Western Australia their hearty sympathy in their desire to secure responsible Government. I believe the younger generation of Victorians desire that the people of Western Australia may possess the same privileges that we now enjoy. Although it may be urged that to hand over the large territory known as Western Australia to 50,000 people would be wrong, it must be remembered that those 50,000 people, with their interests bound up with the progress and prosperity of their colony, must be better judges of their own interests than people who are situated on the other side of the globe. As far as my position in this House is concerned I desire to say that, if the Government submit liberal measures, framed on liberal lines, they will receive my hearty co-operation and support. While I might prefer to see a Liberal Government brought into existence under the Chief Secretary, still I am here to judge measures, and not to judge men; and I repeat that if the measures proposed by the Government are framed on liberal lines they will receive my support. So far as their general policy is concerned, I was an advocate for it at the general election, and I have been returned here to do all I possibly can to see that policy given effect to. Before I sit down, I desire to tender my personal thanks to the House for the kind reception it has accorded to me, a new member. I hope a similar reception awaits other new members. Older members recognise the necessity for the younger members of the community taking their share in the work of legislation. That feeling prevails throughout the colony, and it is in response to that feeling that so many young Australians have been returned to this House. I have no doubt the old members will gladly assist the young members in properly performing their duties. In conclusion, permit me to express the hope that our deliberations will prove to be in the best interests of the colony, which, I may remark, are identical with the best interests of Australia, so that, when we go back to our constituents, we may be able to say that we did all we possibly could to promote liberal legislation, and to bring about a better feeling between the people of the different colonies.

Mr. FOSTER.—Mr. Speaker, I desire also to congratulate you on your unanimous

election. I am sure it is a matter of pleasure to young members, as well as to old members, to see you in the position you now occupy; and I hope that our deliberations will continue to be presided over with the same firmness and fairness that have hitherto characterized your action. I desire to say that I can scarcely agree with a number of the ideas propounded by the honorable member for Clunes. Although I second the motion for an address in reply to the Governor's speech, I think it necessary I should clearly define my position. I sit here behind a Government that I am pledged to support except upon one item of their Tariff. We are told in the speech of His Excellency the Administrator of the Government that the Tariff of last session was remitted to the country for further consideration, and the disputed point which the electors had to deal with was as to whether the farmers' demands should be complied with or not. We find that, by an overwhelming majority, the people of this colony say "No, we will not have any increase of the stock tax, especially," and I believe that was the vital question submitted to the country for reconsideration. Well, sir, the fact of the electors of the country saying "We don't want any extra tax on stock" is my justification for sitting behind this Government, for I think it would be churlish and bad business tactics, and that I should probably injure the prospects of my constituency, if I were to obstruct a Government which I am willing to support loyally and heartily except on that particular question. Honorable gentlemen will therefore understand exactly how I am situated here. If it were possible for the proposed increase of the stock tax to be voted upon as a separate question, I will go this far, and say that if my vote would oust the Government, and that ousting of the Government would give us the increase in the stock tax which the farmers desire, I would cast my vote against the Government. But I am certain that, under the circumstances, seeing that the people of the colony generally have so unmistakably expressed their determination not to have any further increase of the stock-tax, I am justified in promising the Government a hearty and a liberal support with regard to the rest of their programme. In regard to the increase of the stock tax, I only desire to say two or three words more, and this is probably the last time I shall refer to it, as I consider the question is practically dead, at all events for the present. What I want to say is simply this: I believe that the question of increasing the

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stock tax was not thoroughly understood by the electors of this colony. If we are a people who believe in a policy of protection, if protection is to be the policy of this country, I fail to see where the principle comes in, if the permanent occupiers of the soil, who will be the backbone and sinew of this colony in the future, are not to be allowed to participate in the benefits of protection as well as the people in the towns and cities of the colony who gain their living by their labour. It appears to me that if protection is good in principle it is surely as good for those who labour in the country as for those who work in the cities and towns of the colony. The people in these towns and cities virtually say to the farmers—"We know that, in the interests of protection, we make you pay through the nose and up to the hilt for everything you wear and everything you touch, from the time you rise in the morning until the time you retire to bed at night; we make you pay like that, because it enables the manufacturers and employers of labour in our large towns and cities to pay our artisans high wages;" but when it comes to increasing the price of meat a farthing per lb. for the purpose of giving a fair share of the benefits of protection to the farmers, you say "Oh, no; we cannot vote for taxing one of the necessities of life, like butcher's meat; we would rather deal with the foreigner." I am perfectly convinced that ultimately the farmers will be allowed to participate in the benefits of protection, but as the public are not yet educated up to an increase of the stock tax, we will have to let it go for the present, and wait for a more favorable opportunity. We are promised a Railway Extension Bill, and I may say that my experience is that the elections in the country districts have been principally fought on the question of railway extension. I am very glad to find that in the speech of His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, mention is made of the fact that our railways pay, that they are commercially a success. I would point out that we have comparatively very little railway extension in the country districts properly so-called, and I am sure that the further the Government proceeds to extend the railway system into the country districts, reclaiming thousands of square miles of valuable territory which is the common property of the taxpayers of this country, the better appreciated will the policy of the Government be. The more liberal the Railway Extension Bill submitted by the Government, the more popular and acceptable it will be. Honorable members.

will pardon me if I refer to a personal matter. After I reach the extent of our railway system, at Bairnsdale, I have to travel 80 miles in a coach over the roughest roads of the colony, before I reach my home, which is in the centre of a district comprising an area of 6,000 square miles of territory, and there is not a single inch of railway line in the whole of that district. I am very glad to find, in the interests of my constituents, that the Government propose to give us a Railway Bill, and I venture to say that certain lines should be included in that Bill, among the rest, a line to New South Wales, along the coast—an alternative intercolonial line—and another line to the great agricultural plains of Omeo. I believe I am right in saying that nearly every member of this House considers that a coastal intercolonial line should be at once commenced. We are asking for federation; we are anxious to secure the cordial co-operation of New South Wales in all matters affecting the welfare of the colonies, and I know of nothing more likely to foster the federalizing spirit than a line of railway connecting New South Wales and Victoria through Gippsland. It would be a link in the chain of federation stronger than any other we could forge by the carrying out of any public work, and at the same time it would serve as a military line, and also help to develop our natural resources by making available the timber, marble, and mineral deposits of one of the richest parts of the colony. In view of all these advantages, I look forward with confidence to that line of railway being introduced in the Bill. Amongst the other measures promised by the Government is a Bill to amend the Local Government Act. That is very necessary. There is one part of that Act which, I think, might be amended with great advantage, and that is in the way of putting some limit upon what I choose to call the deputation nuisance. I know of an instance in my own constituency where a poor shire has spent as much as £120 in sending down two deputations to Melbourne. I think this money was badly expended, and it certainly would have been used to better purpose if it had been utilized in putting roads in repair. There are holes in some of the roads in that very shire which are a cause of great discomfort and even danger to travellers, and yet the municipal council thought fit to spend £120 in sending two deputations to Melbourne to do what they might surely have got the members for the district to do. The present system of sending large deputations to Melbourne is at once a reflection

upon the representatives of the constituencies and the Government, because it infers that an honorable member cannot get due attention to the wants of his constituency unless he has a large number of his constituents at his back when making his representations, and it likewise implies that the Government are unwilling to do justice to any constituency except upon pressure. I hope, therefore, that the Bill to amend the Local Government Act will contain a clause framed with a view to prevent this useless expenditure on deputations. We are also to have a measure to amend the Public Service Act. That, too, it seems to me, is very necessary. Without professing to understand very much about the working of the Public Service Act, I cannot help thinking that, if one-half of all I hear about it be true, fair play does not exist in the public service. After a man has qualified in a certain branch for promotion to a higher post in that department, and is ready to step into the shoes of his senior when the latter vacates his position, it is monstrous that instead of the man who is fit for the work being promoted to the office, somebody who is not accustomed to the duties is brought from another department and put over his head. That is, to my mind, an obvious injustice, and the system is calculated to operate prejudicially to the public service. I think that, in the matter of promotion, each department should be kept by itself. If there is to be any inducement to young men of ability to enter the service, they must have a certain goal set before them, and it is not fair when a man has made himself efficient for a higher position in any branch of the service that he should be liable to have his hopes of promotion dashed to the ground by somebody from another department being brought in and placed above him, while his claims to promotion are ignored. Each branch department should be exhausted before going outside it to obtain men for the higher position. The State school system of the colony costs us £640,000 a year, and the Government propose to make certain reservations of Crown lands to provide for public instruction in perpetuity, so that this great and glorious system of education shall not break down by its own weight. I heartily approve of that proposal, but I would remind the Government that in making those reservations of Crown lands, for the endowment of our system of public instruction, it will be hardly fair to make all the reservations in country districts, because there are plenty of waste lands round about Melbourne. I

represent a district which embraces an enormous area of Crown lands, and I believe that the Government have put their hand on 150,000 acres in Croajingolong, but if they would fix upon the West Melbourne Swamp, where the land is more valuable, it would bring about a much needed improvement in the sanitary condition of Melbourne, and at the same time make our State school system not only payable but actually reproductive. I cordially approve of the Government proposal to establish agricultural colleges in the various farming districts of the colony, because it is necessary that the people who are to get their living by cultivating the soil should be taught all that science can teach them as to the best means of cultivation. We know that while the land of the colony does not increase the population is increasing, and will continue to increase, and where a selection of 320 acres will keep one family now, it will be necessary, by-and-by, to make it keep two families. The people who have to live on the land should, therefore, be taught how to get the most out of the soil, and all about farming. Agricultural colleges will teach the farmers the constituents of the soil, the products for which it may be most suitable, and generally how to put their land to the very best use. That is exactly what is required, but in addition to these colleges in the agricultural districts we want to see schools of mines established in the auriferous districts. Schools of mines ought to be established in other places besides Ballarat and Sandhurst; they should be established in all places where mining and the search for minerals are being extensively carried on. It is just as necessary to teach the miner how to understand the elements of the rocks which he meets with in his search for gold and other minerals as it is to teach the farmer how to understand the soil which he gets his living from; and I believe that if the instruction which is imparted by the schools of mines were made available throughout the mining districts of the colony, it would prove very advantageous, in the long run, to the colony at large. There has been a good deal said about decentralization. I have no desire to say anything to irritate the feelings of those honorable members who represent town constituencies, or to set them against the honorable members who represent country districts; but I can assure the House there is a general feeling in the country that too much centralization is going on in the colony at the present time. I happened to be in Melbourne on the

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occasion of the last eight hours' demonstration, and I must say that it was a revelation to me. When I saw those thousands of working men marching in procession, with bands of music playing, and banners flying, I was greatly impressed with the enormous political weight which must exist in those trades unions, and I could not help reflecting that, unless there was in power a Government with a very stiff backbone, the Ministry of the day dare not deal out even-handed justice to the country districts unless through the favour of the artisans of the metropolis who exercise such an enormously overwhelming political influence. I am very glad to believe that I am sitting behind a Government that has a strong backbone, and I hope that the Government will not be afraid to do justice to the country districts. I am convinced that unless the interests of the country districts are duly considered and fostered as they need to be the great city of Melbourne will suffer. Melbourne is like a man whose head has grown too big for his body, and unless something is done to promote the prosperity of the country districts in at least the same ratio as the prosperity of Melbourne, I can assure you that this great metropolis will be overgrown by-and-by and must collapse of its own weight. Speaking seriously, I believe it would be very much to the advantage of Melbourne, if a more decentralizing policy were carried out in the future than has been carried out in the past. I observe that in the speech of His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, whatever reference is made to mining is made with regard to mining in the past. I don't think for one moment that the Government mean to imply that mining is on the decline, that it is an expiring industry. Certainly the miners of the colony do not regard it as a dying industry, and I think when it is considered that since 1852 this industry has raised more than £220,000,000 worth of gold, it will be admitted on all hands that mining must have been a very important factor in bringing about the present state of prosperity in Victoria. This fact alone ought to give the Government and the country every encouragement to have our virgin areas tested and our undeveloped mines worked out as fast as they possibly can be. I agree with the honorable member who preceded me, that, in a certain measure, the local prospecting boards are comparatively useless. My experience of the prospecting boards has led me to that conclusion. In the first place, I do not see



any necessity for having brought them into existence, but I do see the necessity of abolishing them so soon as the principle which underlies the Government scheme has been generally recognised. From the very constitution of the prospecting boards you can expect nothing whatever except that immediate local requirements will be attended to. The boards are composed of local men, and every board naturally fights for its own district, and every member fights for his own locality. My experience of the prospecting boards is this: They get applications for assistance varying from £50 to £2,000; they have a certain amount of money to distribute, and it is doled out in sums of £50 and £100, and as a matter of fact no good result accrues from such expenditure. It would be far better for the Government to adopt a wide general scheme of prospecting, under which special attention would be given to the testing of virgin areas. As a practical illustration, let me give you the experience of the Gippsland Prospecting Board. The Gippsland board had £10,000 allotted to it. Of that amount £3,500 was spent without any practical result being obtained, according to the departmental records. I may mention, in passing, that I was chairman of the Gippsland board at the time, and therefore I speak with authority. The balance of the grant, between £6,000 and £7,000, we devoted to exploring virgin country, and I can assure honorable members that very great results have been obtained from that expenditure. It appears to me that the idea of the Government, when they put £80,000 on the Estimates for prospecting, was that new gold-fields should be discovered. Well, we are not likely to find new gold-fields at Ballarat and Sandhurst. We must go into the virgin areas of country, where no real prospecting has yet been done, if we want to find new gold-fields. If we continue the present plan we shall be merely subsidizing certain joint stock companies, whose shareholders get all the immediate advantages thus gained, while the country at large is not materially benefited by such expenditure from the prospecting vote. I would be willing to see the vote reduced by one-half, if the money were expended in testing the virgin areas of the colony. There is one thing in regard to the administration of the Mining department with which I find fault, and that is that the whole of the £80,000 is devoted to prospecting for gold only. I consider that a mistake. I know there are certain areas in this colony where

coal, silver, copper, tin, and other minerals are to be found; but prospecting parties subsidized from this prospecting vote of £80,000 have no power to look for anything except for gold. The discovery of a new gold-field would, of course, be a great advantage to the colony, but the discovery of a new coal-field, a new tin-field, or a new copper-field, would be of as much importance to the public of Victoria, because it would have the same result of providing additional employment for labour and creating another wage fund. In my own district one of the prospecting parties found traces of tin. According to the regulations, they could not follow up the discovery; but they ignored the regulations, prosecuted their search, and the outcome of their efforts was the biggest tin find ever made in the colony. In my opinion, the search for silver, tin, and other minerals besides gold should be assisted out of the prospecting vote. A certain sum should be put aside for prospecting for other minerals than gold. As a mining man, I consider that £3,000 is a small paltry amount to devote to prospecting for coal-fields. Nothing is of greater importance to us than that a thorough test should be made of our coal measures, with a view to ascertain whether we have not in this colony sufficient coal for our own requirements, without being dependent upon supplies from outside. When the next Estimates are brought down, I hope to find that a much larger sum than £3,000 is to be devoted to prospecting for coal. Another thing which strikes me as a very great anomaly is that we have actually to send tons upon tons of pyrites and tailings to a foreign country for treatment. If it pays to send the material to Germany to be treated, surely we ought to be able to make it pay in Victoria, and I think that steps should be taken by the Government of the colony to find out the best processes of treating pyrites and tailings, and establish similar industries here. A serious reflection will rest upon us so long as we admit that we cannot treat the natural products of our own soil. I believe that if the Government were to offer a bonus of, say, £5,000 or even £3,000, for the best method of gold-saving that can be found, enormous areas of auriferous country now lying idle could be profitably worked, and thousands of pounds worth of gold lost in the tailings would be saved to the colony every year. I sincerely hope to see some steps taken in this direction before long. There are great complaints with regard to delay in the issue of gold-mining leases. I may say that I have had some little experience in this matter,

and I find that the Mining department is very lax in the issue of leases. I have known of an instance in which twelve months elapsed before a lease was granted. These delays involve a great deal of expense and a waste of time for which there is no necessity. Before resuming my seat, I should like to say a word or two about the new Secretary of the Mining department. While I have not the honour of his personal acquaintance, I believe that the Government have made an appointment that will be popular all over the colony, and beneficial to the mining industry, and although, as I have already explained, I do not approve of the practice of going outside a department to find men for its higher offices, I believe that if the whole colony had been searched, the Government would not have found a better man for the position of Secretary of the Mining department. Mr. Speaker, I have to thank honorable members for the patient attention which they have given to me, and I beg to second the motion.

The motion for an address in reply to the speech of the Acting Governor was then agreed to.

Mr. PEACOCK moved—

“That a select committee be appointed to draw up an address to be presented to His Excellency the Administrator of the Government upon the said resolution, such committee to consist of Mr. Clark, Mr. Foster, Mr. Madden, Mr. Officer, Mr. C. Smith, Mr. Stewart, and the mover; and that they do retire immediately.”

Mr. FOSTER seconded the motion, which was agreed to.

The committee withdrew, and, after a short absence, returned with the following address:—

“To His Excellency Sir William Cleaver Francis Robinson, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Administrator of the Government of the Colony of Victoria and its Dependencies, &c., &c., &c.

“We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign.

“We thank Your Excellency for having called us together after the shortest interval compatible with the due preparation of measures to be laid before us. The proportion of representatives to the different parts of the country having been re-adjusted, we concur with Your Excellency that it may be expected that the two Houses will therefore give more complete expression to the wishes and wants of the country.

“We are glad to know that the prosperity which this colony has so long enjoyed happily still continues, aided, as it is, by political quietude and prevailing public confidence.

“We thank Your Excellency for informing us that in the late session of the Federal Council a resolution was passed recommending that the

necessary steps be taken, as provided by the Constitution of the Council, for increasing the number of its members; and we are glad to learn that Your Excellency's advisers will take an early opportunity of inviting our consideration of an address to Her Majesty on the subject.

“It affords us gratification to know that the energy and thoroughness with which Victoria has prepared to resist foreign aggression have attracted the warm praise of statesmen and competent critics in Great Britain, and that the progress made during the past year has been steady and gratifying. We are glad also to be informed that the re-armament of the forts has been pushed on; that a new corps of Victorian Rangers has been formed from the rifle clubs in country districts; and that private liberality has contributed a half-battery of horse artillery. We learn with satisfaction that the Easter encampment of this year was largely attended, and that the manœuvres, which were of more than common interest, showed that our officers and men are acquiring the initiative and efficiency of trained troops.

“We thank Your Excellency for calling our attention to the report of the Royal Commission on Public Health, which has thrown additional light on the insanitary state of Melbourne. It is evident that the law is insufficient, or that its administration by local bodies is not vigorous enough to meet the wants of a great and growing city; and we recognise the fact that on Parliament will devolve the duty of seeing that one of the wealthy cities of the world does not expose itself to conditions of disease or death which have been successfully combated in poor countries.

“The Exhibition of last year having attracted a good many persons from other countries who possessed a knowledge of what has been done elsewhere to promote technical education, we are pleased to learn that the evidence of these gentlemen and of some of our own employers of labour was collected and reported on by a committee, which has pointed out in what way certain desirable changes may best be introduced, and that meanwhile technical schools are springing up in new places, and are crowded with eager students wherever they are established.

“The important duty of representing the Australian colonies at the Paris Exhibition having largely devolved upon Victoria, we are pleased to be informed that Your Excellency's advisers felt that they were bound to disregard all difficulties and considerations of inadequate space in view of the assistance unsparingly given by France to our own Exhibition. It is gratifying to us to know that, in spite of delays, for which neither France nor this country is responsible, our court was among the first to be ready, and that our exhibitors have attracted favorable and discriminating notice.

“It affords us satisfaction to learn that the area under the operation of the Irrigation Act is being rapidly extended, and that excellent results are being obtained wherever the farmers are able to use the water upon their holdings. We agree with Your Excellency that henceforward the yields from land under the new system, which has been so readily adopted throughout the colony, may be relied upon to increase steadily from year to year as the schemes already projected by the Trusts are brought into working order. We are also