

V I C T O R I A .

E M I G R A T I O N D E P O T .

Ordered by the COUNCIL to be printed 29th June, 1852.

LETTER from WYNDHAM HARDING, ESQ.

*London and South Western Railway Secretary's Office,
York Road, 21st February, 1852.*

SIR,

You are doubtless aware that the superior eligibility of Southampton as the Port of embarkation for Australian Emigrants, was brought before Parliament in the last Session, when a promise was elicited by the Honorable Francis Scott, M.P., from the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, that the adjudication of the tenders for Emigrants' Depôts, which had then been recently made in favour of continuing the Depôt at Deptford, should not prevent the fair re-consideration of the subject, when the period had elapsed for which the contract had been let.

As the contract admits of being opened after the 1st July, 1852, it is, I humbly venture to submit, desirable, that before that period such measures should be taken as will secure a full re-consideration of the subject, embracing the opinion of the Colonies themselves, on a question involving so serious an expenditure of Colonial Funds; and now of such paramount importance to the Australian Colonies.

I further submit, that this is the more necessary, as, from the terms of 5 and 6 Victoria, cap. 36, the expenditure of the Colonial Funds comes neither within the Estimates subjected to Parliamentary scrutiny in this country, nor is it submitted to the Colonial Legislature; and it is thus in a position to escape scrutiny altogether.

Before proceeding further, I think it right that it should be understood that I write as the Officer of the Railway Company communicating between London and Southampton, which Company is therefore interested in the determination of the question of ports of embarkation.

I may add, that as an acting member of Mrs. Chisholm's Colonization Society, I am personally cognizant of the feelings and wants of Emigrants on the points under consideration.

I therefore venture to hope that I may claim the attention of yourself, Sir, and of the Legislative Council, on the following facts, elicited in the enclosed documents and affecting Colonial interests.

That the Emigration Commissioners have rejected the proposal which was made to them to embark Australian Emigrants at Southampton, and have resolved to continue the contract, (at higher prices by 30 per cent., in regard to Depôt accommodation), for embarking these Emigrants at Deptford.

That the Commissioners have adopted this course in direct contradiction to the advice of their own Officer, Lieutenant Lean, R.N.,—the only practical man connected with the Commission,—who, in his Report, clearly sets forth the great advantages and economy of embarking Australian Emigrants at Southampton, in preference to the Thames, at Deptford. (See Lieutenant Lean's Report.)

That by adhering to the embarkation at Deptford, the Emigrants and Ships are unnecessarily exposed to the casualties and also to the delays continually occurring in the Downs, (on which see the accompanying Return from Lloyd's, showing, that in seven years, 300 wrecks have occurred at this part of the Channel, including the loss of several emigrant ships) These delays average more than a week, and often amount to three weeks, during which time the Colony needlessly loses the labour of the Emigrants; while the emigrants themselves lose the wages of that labour.

That in addition to these considerations, it is to be borne in mind, that by gathering together the Emigrants in the manner proposed in the Tender of the London and South Western Railway Company above Vauxhall Bridge, and then conveying them direct to the ship's side, in the Dock at Southampton, when the ship is ready to sail they would be saved from the impositions of runners and crimps, and the moral dangers to which Emigrants are so notoriously exposed when embarking in the Dock, or amongst the Shipping of the River below Bridge.

That by continuing the embarkation of Emigrants at Deptford, and rejecting the proposed arrangement for effecting their embarkation at Southampton, the Commissioners have adopted the course, of all others, most calculated to retard the progress of Australian Emigration, and to increase the strong prejudice of the working people of this country, against emigrating under the Commissioners' regulations, which is now so great as to render it necessary to expend a large

yearly amount in head money, to Agents, for inducing Emigrants to accept even a gratuitous or assisted passage in the Commissioners' ships.

The amount expended under this Head, "Selection of Emigrants," was, it appears, during three years ending 30th June, 1850, no less than £11,268. (See Return to order of House of Commons, 15th August, 1850. Mr. Bright, 734.)

The documents which establish these facts are enclosed, and will be found to consist—

- 1st. Of Returns to the House of Commons, (to an Address dated 15th April, 1851), of 6th June, 1851, and a further Return of 24th June, 1851, for copies of Advertisements issued by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, and of Tenders, and also of Correspondence, including Lieutenant Lean's Report, relative to Tenders for Board and Lodging of Emigrants, in depôts at London, Plymouth, and Southampton.
- 2nd. Return to House of Commons, 15th August, 1850.
- 3rd. List of Casualties and Wrecks in the Downs, during a period of 18 Months, prepared by Mr. Young, (an Underwriter of Lloyd's.)
- 4th. Two Statements, prepared for the use of Members of Parliament, as to best site for Emigrant Depôts.

In conclusion, I have humbly and respectfully to express a hope that the matter will be considered worthy the attention of yourself and of the Legislative Council of the Colony, and that you will be pleased to send home such instructions as will impress the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners with the importance attached by the Colonies to the question of the Port of embarkation for Emigrants, and will enable those members of Parliament who take a special interest in Colonial affairs, to demand effectually that the subject should be again thrown open to enquiry, and public tender, at the earliest possible opportunity.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,
WYNDHAM HARDING.

The Honorable the SPEAKER
of the
Legislative Council, Victoria.