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**Administering Emigration.
Thomas Elliot and Government-Assisted Emigration
from Britain to Australia 1831 - 1855**

**Thesis for the qualification of Ph.D.
by Margaret Ray**

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University of Durham

Department of History

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2001



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**Administering Emigration. Thomas Elliot and Government-Assisted Emigration
from Britain to Australia 1831-55**

Abstract of the thesis for submission for the higher degree of Ph.D.

2001

This thesis illuminates administration of nineteenth-century government-assisted emigration to Australia in the context of the career of Thomas Elliot (1808-80), a Colonial Office civil servant. As Agent-General for Emigration, Chairman of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission and subsequently Assistant Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, his involvement with emigration and the Australian colonies spanned four decades. Assisted emigration during this period relied on complex and contrived bureaucratic frameworks, and private enterprise. Without the inducements of financial assistance and government intervention thousands of people would not have made the long journey. Examination of Elliot's career extends understanding not only of British-Australian emigration history but also of nineteenth-century government administration. The issues explored include government administrative change, the 'quality' of emigrants who were assisted, and provisions for their health and safety during their voyage to Australia. Elliot's role as a 'policy-maker' is considered, and attention given to his philosophical leanings. Viewed from these perspectives, Elliot is revealed as a powerful innovative civil servant, important in the fields of both emigration and administrative history, whose direction of emigration policy had resounding effects in the Australian colonies.

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Margaret Ray

Abbreviations

<i>B.P.P.</i>	British Parliamentary Papers
CLEC	Colonial Land and Emigration Commission
CO	Colonial Office Records, Public Record Office
ML	Mitchell Library, Sydney
NLS	National Library of Scotland
PLC	Poor Law Commission

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Introduction

Emigration is a complex subject for historical research. Richard Haskett, in his 1956 history of American immigration referred to the 'awesome task confronting anyone who attempts to master the subject of emigration'.¹ Four years later, in a seminal paper presented in Stockholm, Frank Thistlewaite endorsed the formidable character of the job before students of the subject.² The multi-faceted nature of emigration is amply demonstrated in the rich and varied academic studies which have emerged during the latter half of the twentieth century. A current trend is to exploit the rich seam of sources that have become available to expose the socio-economic and cultural perspectives of the participants of emigration - their pre-embarkation circumstances, their interaction with Poor Law authorities, the extent of their literacy and skills,³ shipboard memoirs,⁴ gender perspectives⁵ and the relevance of community

¹ R.C. Haskett, 'Problems and Prospects in the History of American Immigration', W.E. Schmidt, C.B. Lavell and R.C. Haskett (eds.), *A Report on World Population Migrations as related to the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., 1956), p. 48.

² Frank Thistlewaite, 'Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' *Rapports, v: Histoire Contemporaine, XIe Congress International des Sciences Historiques* (Stockholm, 1960), also reprinted in Stanley N. Katz and Stanley I Kutler (eds), *New Perspectives of the American Past*, vol. 2 (Boston, 1969; 1972), pp. 45-70.

³ See for example, Robin F. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-60* (Basingstoke, 1997); Eric Richards, Richard Reid and David Fitzpatrick (eds.) *Visible Immigrants: Neglected Sources for the History of Australian Immigration* (Canberra, 1989); Gary Howells, 'Emigrants and Emigrators: A Study of Emigration and the New Poor Law with special reference to Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Norfolk, 1834-1860', (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1996); Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca and London, 1994); David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (Cork, 1994).

⁴ See for example, Andrew Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth-Century British Emigrants* (Manchester and New York, 1994); Patrick O'Farrell, *Letters from Australia 1825-1929* (Sydney and Belfast, 1984).

⁵ See for example, Eric Richards (ed.), *Visible Women: Female Immigrants in Colonial Australia* (Canberra, 1995); Deborah Oxley, *Convict Maids: the forced migration of women to Australia* (Melbourne, 1996).



and identity.⁶ Other research has used these sources to build upon and advance the groundbreaking work done in the earlier twentieth century⁷ on the private and government mechanisms and policies which enabled emigrants from the poorer sections of society to travel to the other side of the world.

Government-assisted emigration was a significant feature of this movement. Between 1831 and 1860, 55.5 per cent of Australian immigrants from the United Kingdom were government assisted.⁸ Without the inducements of financial assistance, government intervention and human engineering, thousands would not have made the long journey. Examination of the development of government policies and administrative frameworks to facilitate this phenomenon can shed further light not only on both British-Australian emigration history, but also on a further subject of historical debate - nineteenth-century government administration. Government assistance was only one of the strategies for emigrating to the Australian colonies. Other methods employed included self-funded passages and schemes financed by philanthropic and voluntary agencies. It has been shown, however, that state-aided

⁶ Bill Jones, 'Cousin Dai and Cousin Dilys? South Australia's Nineteenth Century Welsh Heritage', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, 27 (1999), pp.28-43; William D. Jones, 'Welsh Identities in Ballarat, Australia, During the Late Nineteenth Century', *Welsh History Review*, 20 (2000).

⁷ See for example, W.A. Carrothers, *Emigration from the British Isles: with Special Reference to the Development of the Overseas Dominions* (London, 1929); Helen I. Cowan, *British Emigration in British North America: The First Hundred Years* (Toronto, revised edition, 1961); Fred Hitchins, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission* (Philadelphia, 1942); H.J.M. Johnston, *British Emigration Policy 1815-1830* (London, 1972); R.C. Mills, *The Colonization of Australia, 1829-42: The Wakefield Experiment in Empire Building* (London, 1915).

⁸ Robin F. Haines, 'Indigent Misfits or Shrewd Operators? Government-Assisted Emigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia, 1831-1860', *Population Studies*, 48 (1994), pp. 223-47.

emigration acted as a stimulus to other movements⁹ thus underlining the significance of the government programmes.

As Thomas Frederick Elliot was a central figure in managing and administering emigration schemes, his career can reveal much about their character, and opens new perspectives in emigration and administrative history. This thesis aims to provide deeper understanding of the problems involved and the influences at work in the administration of state-aided emigration, and will disclose unfamiliar aspects which had bearing on the development of the administration of modern government.

This introduction presents historiographical context for the thesis and identifies the questions which will be addressed in the following chapters. It is organised into four broad themes. First, consideration is given to relevant historical debates and the significance of Elliot's career for deepening existing understanding of the administration of emigration. Second, the sources which have been used to extend or reassess existing interpretations will be indicated. Third, a brief biographical sketch of Elliot is offered. Finally, an outline of the approach of the thesis will be presented.

The history of nineteenth-century emigration from Britain to her Australian colonies has generally remained the concern of Australian and Celtic historians, economists and demographers. Despite the British Isles contributing the largest proportion of emigrants Thistlewaite was surprised at 'how little notice the English historians take of the fact. To the national historian emigration appears to be an embarrassing subject, best ignored'.¹⁰ Since Thistlewaite's observation, some research

⁹ M. Harper, *Emigration from the North-East of Scotland 1830-1880*, Vol. 1 (Aberdeen, 1988).

¹⁰ Thistlewaite, 'Migration from Europe', p. 50.

has been undertaken to address this omission.¹¹ But there still remains an apparent lack of interest for the subject among English historians. Eric Richards noted the ‘unhappy condition of the literature on the history of British emigration’, of which part of the blame he believed was the ‘product of the relatively meagre effort invested in the subject by British historians.’¹² The significance of this is twofold. Firstly, research of specifically English or broader based British emigration helps to ‘complete’ the picture of migration from the British Isles, in which, until now Celtic perspectives have dominated. Secondly, the study of British emigration can illuminate other fields of study, including social history, economic history, imperial history, and administrative history. Thistlewaite’s demand for authoritative investigation of the European background to emigration was particularly taken up by European historians and led to studies concerning social mobility, new labour history, immigrant cities, return migration and the impact of emigration on the sending countries. But much of this research concerned emigration to North America, rather than the more distant destination of Australia – an emigration which raised different problems which taxed the ministers and officials concerned.

Charlotte Erickson described Thistlewaite’s paper as an ‘inspiration’, but almost forty years later she suggested that the possibilities for advancing and

¹¹ See for example Gary Howells, ‘Emigrants and Emigrators’; Stephen Constantine, ‘Empire migration and social reform 1880-1950’ in C.G. Pooley and I.D. Whyte (eds.), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: a social history of migration* (London and New York, 1991), pp. 62-83.

¹² Eric Richards, ‘Annals of the Australian Immigrant’ in E.Richards, R. Reid and D. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Visible Immigrants: Neglected Sources for the History of Australian Immigration* (Canberra, 1989), p. 12.

deepening knowledge about European migration had still not been exhausted.¹³ The heightening of immigration as a contemporary issue, she suggested, enhances the value of pursuing new themes, methods and sources. Erickson herself has stimulated much interest in emigration research. She identified certain periods of English emigration history which she felt have been ignored. Erickson declared that neither American nor British historians have demonstrated much interest in nineteenth-century English emigration. Gary Howells, who rose to Erickson's challenge and has recently extended the scholarship in nineteenth-century assisted emigration, declared that historians' knowledge of assisted emigration during this period is 'incomplete and sketchy', and that secondary sources have given the impression that understanding of the subject is more complete than is actually the case.¹⁴

A means of addressing outstanding questions about assisted emigration is to focus on Elliot. He has received less attention than he deserves from historians. Previous studies have considered distinct aspects of Elliot's emigration work. R.B. Madgwick and Robin Haines, for example, discussed his involvement with the development of mechanisms for recruitment and selection of assisted emigrants. Oliver MacDonagh focused on his involvement with passenger regulation. Fundamental as these studies¹⁵ are, they necessarily give only an incomplete perspective of Elliot's emigration work; yet an understanding of the various activities

¹³ C. Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca and London, 1994), p. 5. Recent studies by Haines, *Emigration* and Howells, 'Emigrants and Emigrators' also reiterate the significance of Thistlewaite's challenge.

¹⁴ Gary Howells, 'Emigrants and Emigrators', p. 17.

¹⁵ R.B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia 1788-1851* (Sydney, 1969, 2nd imp.); Oliver MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth 1800-60* (London, 1961); Robin F. Haines, 'Government-Assisted Emigration from the United Kingdom to Australia, 1831-1860: Promotion, Recruitment and the Labouring Poor', (PhD thesis, Flinders University, 1992).

and guiding principles of such a central figure will cast new light on British emigration and the 'revolution' in British government.

Elliot served as a Colonial Office official for forty-three years, during which he was involved with numerous and varied aspects of colonial administration,¹⁶ but as Elliot himself noted, it was his services to emigration that were most worthy of note.¹⁷ Yet aside from the studies of Madgwick, MacDonagh and Haines, Elliot has tended to have been overlooked. There has been no authoritative assessment of Elliot's career, indeed historians have shown little interest in pursuing a fuller analysis of Elliot. For a man who was described as influencing 'the composition of Australian immigration more than any other individual in its early history',¹⁸ relatively little attention has been directed at him. This is a significant omission. Other influential Victorian administrators, for example Edwin Chadwick and Kay-Shuttleworth, have been well documented. Yet in many ways, Elliot remains an enigma.

This thesis hopes to redress the relative neglect of Elliot, and reveal more facets of Elliot the administrator. It will seek to illuminate Elliot's role in the wider context of nineteenth-century administrative change, by means of his association with government-assisted emigration to the Australian colonies. This will not only involve reassessment of previous interpretations and assumptions about Elliot and his work, but consideration of new lines of enquiry.

¹⁶ During his career he gave his attention to a variety of colonial interests including British North America, the West Indies, New Zealand, convict transportation, colonial revenue and colonial military expenditure.

¹⁷ Elliot memoir, n.d. November 1868, Elliot papers, MS 19432/ 224.

¹⁸ Eric Richards, 'British Poverty and Australian Immigration in the Nineteenth Century' in Eric Richards (ed.), *Poor Australian Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century: Visible Immigrants: Two* (Canberra, 1991), p. 16.

Any examination of government-assisted emigration in the context of Elliot's career must include the circumstances surrounding the inception of assisted emigration resulting from the Ripon Regulations of 1831. Contemporary attitudes and the relevance of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's theory of systematic colonization provide the context for the thesis. These preliminary years of government emigration were significant – not only as experimental ventures for government's forays into extending state responsibility to the movement of people, but for the shaping of Australian society. These years were also a formative period in Elliot's career. Impressions and experiences he gained from his work with the Emigration Commissioners coloured his attitude towards later arrangements for assisted schemes. Existing literature¹⁹ has provided detailed understanding of the schemes operating at this time. Yet within these interpretations there remain areas which would benefit from further enquiry. The significance of Elliot's role during this period has either been overlooked entirely, or underestimated. Re-examination of the commencement of assisted emigration will not only reveal Elliot's role during this period but will also provide an understanding of the problems and tensions which faced Elliot during his management of emigration in the following years.

Assisted emigration was not a spontaneous action - nor was it a cohesive system. On its inauguration, government agencies had little direct experience of managing emigration. The task of managing the transfer of thousands of assisted

¹⁹ Notably R.C. Mills, *The Colonization of Australia 1839-1842* (London, 1915); Madgwick, *Immigration*; Fred H. Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*; Peter Burroughs, *Britain and Australia 1831-1855: A Study in Imperial Relations and Crown Lands Administration* (Oxford, 1967); A.J. Hammerton, '“Without Natural Protectors”: Female Immigration to Australia, 1832-36', *Historical Studies*, 16 (1975), pp. 539-66.

emigrants to the Australian colonies called for innovation and at times improvisation in administrative policies and procedures. It required the interaction and co-operation of government departments, private enterprise, and local agencies, but it fell to the Colonial Office to co-ordinate and administer the schemes. Colonial Office responsibility for administration of emigration divides conveniently into three periods. The first phase was from 1831 to 1836, which was when the early experimental emigration schemes were operating. The second phase covers the reign of Elliot as Agent-General for Emigration from 1837 to 1840. The final period is dominated by the work of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (CLEC) which was established in 1840 and continued until 1878. Elliot's administrative role was crucial during each of these periods. Studies undertaken in the early part of the twentieth century²⁰ laid the foundation for later research on the development of administration for emigration. Fred Hitchins' acclaimed study of the CLEC remains the authoritative monograph on its work.²¹ It included the pre-CLEC years 1815-40, and he declared that his concern was with the attitude of the British and colonial governments and the actual process of emigration. Yet Hitchins described his book as a 'preliminary survey' of what he felt to be an unexplored area, and he hoped it would stimulate further contributions.²² Six years later Madgwick's work shed further light on the administrative mechanisms for emigration to eastern Australia during the first half of the nineteenth century. Madgwick's was a pioneering work, which argued that the

²⁰ For example, Mills, *Colonization*; W.A. Carrothers, *Emigration from the British Isles: With Special Reference to the Development of the Overseas Dominions* (London, 1929:1965).

²¹ Fred H. Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*.

²² *Ibid.*, pp.vii-viii.

story of Australian immigration before 1851 was an important part of Imperial history because it influenced later migration schemes, not only in Australia but in other parts of the British Empire. He stressed the significance of government-assisted immigration, which during the early nineteenth century was unique to Australia.²³ His study was wide-ranging, embracing the early emigration schemes, the development of the 'machinery of control' for the government and bounty schemes and the early work of the CLEC.

More recent studies have made innovative use of sources not explored by or not available to Madgwick and other earlier historians.²⁴ These have been used to offer new contexts for investigation of assisted emigration. Haines' work included detailed examination of the mechanics of emigration recruitment and the mobilization of emigrants by government officials. New facets and assessments of Elliot's work emerged. These were particularly valuable for illuminating his relationship with Poor Law officials and local landowners. Such examination of the nature and methods employed can reveal much about assisted emigration and also the broader picture of government administration.

Another area in which there is a clear need for closer investigation is the 'quality' of nineteenth-century government-assisted emigrants. The question of whether the imperial government used government-assisted emigration to Australia as

²³ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. xiv.

²⁴ For example, Eric Richards uses emigrants letters in conjunction with more traditional sources in 'How did Poor People Emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the Nineteenth Century?', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 32, 3 (1993), pp. 250-79; Robin F Haines, *Emigration*, exploited data on emigrants' origins, literacy, religion and occupation, emigrants' memoirs and other contemporary statement in addition to official correspondence to offer new perspectives on the process of assisted emigration. Gary Howells concentrated on Poor Law records for his study of assisted emigration from the south Midlands and Norfolk 'Emigrants and Emigrators'.

a means of ‘shovelling out’²⁵ its destitute population has provided a lively and enduring debate. Contemporary criticism and negative perceptions of the quality of emigrants leaving British shores for Australia reflected the widely-held perception that the assisted emigrants were paupers, and ‘indigent misfits’. This theme has remained a dominant feature in Australian historiography. Madgwick concluded that ‘many of the arrivals were far from ideal types with which to develop the young colony’ and that assisted emigrants were ‘a poor sample of British workmen’.²⁶ These perceptions have been so compelling that they have been accepted and reinforced by later historians²⁷ and still remain a strong historiographical theme.²⁸

There has been a reaction against these interpretations. Haines suggested that many historians had simply précised Madgwick’s arguments and shown no awareness of such work as that of historians R.J. Schultz and F.K.Crowley²⁹ who by analysing emigrants’ socio-demographic characteristics have arrived at an ‘opposite point of view’.³⁰ Schultz, in his study of assisted immigration to New South Wales and the

²⁵ Charles Buller coined the term ‘shovelling out paupers’ in a speech made to the House of Commons in 1843. *Hansard*, 3rd series, lxxviii, 522.

²⁶ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 250.

²⁷ Notably R. M. Crawford, *Australia* (London, 1952, 1979).

²⁸ For example Noel Butlin’s posthumously published work raised questions about the possible concealment of convicts under the cloak of assisted immigration, suggesting that the distinction between convict and assisted migrants became ‘shadowy’ during the nineteenth century and that perhaps a significant proportion of assisted immigration had been a form of ‘proto-transportation’ of convicts, thus finding ‘an even cheaper solution to some of ... [Britain’s] criminal problem’; N.G. Butlin, *Forming a Colonial Economy: Australia 1810-1850* (Melbourne, 1994), pp. 18-19. More recently, Stuart Macintyre declared that assisted emigration ‘produced an immigrant cohort that was hardly different in background and circumstances from the convicts – it is no exaggeration to regard them as quasi-transportees’: Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 77.

²⁹ R.J. Shultz, ‘Assisted Immigration into New South Wales and Port Phillip District 1837-1850’ (PhD thesis, Canberra, Australian National University, 1971); F.K. Crowley, ‘British Migration to Australia: 1860-1914’ (Oxford, D.Phil. thesis, 1951).

³⁰ Haines, *Emigration*, pp. 11-13.

Port Phillip District, 1831-50, concluded that the immigrants were not inferior, but represented a 'cross-section of the British labouring classes'. He suggested that it was possible that in the long term, the government immigrants were the most important acquisition to the colony.³¹ Haines herself argued convincingly that male assisted emigrants were versatile and brought a range of rural skills crucial for the developing primary industries in the colonies. Women and female adolescents, she also found, had 'diverse husbandry and housewifery skills'. She was adamant that government-assisted emigrants were not 'the sweepings of the brothels and streets of British and Irish towns' but were 'enterprising individuals whose impressive levels of literacy enabled them to make informed choices about the destination best suited to their skills...In so far as age, occupation, literacy, family size, and gender are concerned, precisely the types of workers required for the country's social, agricultural, industrial, and economic development stepped ashore in Australia'.³² Investigation of Elliot's approach to the recruitment and selection process will make it possible to assess whether or not the Colonial Office conspired with Poor Law authorities, landowners other local agencies to rid Britain of its destitute population and 'indigent misfits'.

Examination of practical arrangements for the administration of recruitment and selection of assisted emigrants proceeds logically to consideration of the welfare and protection of emigrants, in terms of passenger trade and regulation. The inadequacy of health and safety provision at British ports and on emigrant ships led to

³¹ Schultz, 'Assisted Immigrants', p.199- 200.

³² Schultz, 'Assisted Immigrants', p.199- 200.

a call for improvement in passenger protection from a range of sources including colonial reformers, humanitarians, colonial authorities, emigrants and some newspapers. But it was the *Durham Report* of 1839 which drew particular attention to the inadequacy of passenger legislation for emigrants to British North America. It squarely laid the blame for the appalling state of onboard provision and protection at the door of the Colonial Office – to be more specific – at Elliot’s door. In 1961 Oliver MacDonagh used emigrant protection as a gateway into the field of legislation for passenger protection, as part of his examination of the growth of modern government. This was a detailed and valuable examination of the work of the corps of emigration officers, over whom Elliot had direct supervision for ten years. But there were inconsistencies in MacDonagh’s interpretation. On the one hand he suggested that Elliot brought a new sense of purpose to the work of the emigration corps. Yet on the other hand, he argued that Elliot did little to achieve greater protection of emigrants. Such ambivalence suggests a need for further explanation and exploration of the dynamics and the underlying themes in the development of passenger protection.

The problems presented so far are concerned mainly with the organisational aspects of emigration administration. But the influences which shaped the administrative framework are also important. It is here that there remains substantial uncharted territory, despite Eric Richards’ declaration that knowledge about the institutional framework of the emigration system and the evolution of policy in Australia and in London was ‘strong’.³³ Certainly previous studies,³⁴ Richards himself,

³³ Richards et al., *Visible Immigrants*, p. 8.

³⁴ Madgwick, *Immigration*; Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*; Mills, *Colonization*.

and more recently Haines have contributed greatly to the knowledge of the process, organisation and policies of government-assisted emigration. Yet despite this wealth of historiography, specific aspects require further exposition and elucidation. What was the extent of the influence of permanent officials in government policy for assisted-emigration to Australia? How was this influence derived?

The roles of the Colonial Office and its officials have received considerable attention from imperial historians seeking to illuminate the developments and formulation of policy for colonial administration during the period 1830-1850. The work of James Stephen has featured prominently in these studies.³⁵ As legal counsel and later permanent Under-Secretary he came under severe criticism from contemporaries, especially colonial reformers, for his perceived manipulation of secretaries of state and his ascendancy in colonial affairs. So compelling were these impressions that they were accepted by some historians. Others concluded that Stephen had not been so influential in colonial policy-making as had been originally assumed. These interpretations were valuable for bringing into focus other Colonial Office civil servants, including Elliot. Cell argued that some permanent officials played a significant role in the formation of colonial policy. In his essay on the work of the Colonial Office from the perspective of British North America during the period 1801-50, Buckner concluded that Elliot was virtually performing the duties of an

³⁵ P. Knaplund, *James Stephen and the British Colonial System* (Madison, 1953); J.W.Cell, *British Colonial Administration in the Mid Nineteenth Century: The Policy-Making Process* (New Haven and London, 1970); H.L. Hall, *The Colonial Office, A History* (London, 1937); D.M. Young, *The Colonial Office in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, 1961); G. Kitson Clark, '“Statesmen in disguise” reflexions on the history of the neutrality of the civil service', *Historical Journal*, 2 (1959), pp. 19-39.

under-secretary.³⁶ MacDonagh however, despite acknowledging Elliot's contribution to the development of passenger legislation, concluded that there was no influential civil servant guiding policy for emigrant protection.

Clearly, there are paradoxes. Yet this is an important aspect of emigration and administrative history, which demands further investigation. Examination of the extent of the influence Elliot exerted over emigration policy for the Australian colonies will reveal new perspectives for both themes. Haines' research has demonstrated the significance of the emigration policy and systems which were introduced in the 1830s and 1840s. These were to remain influential until the latter part of the nineteenth century.³⁷ Much has been assumed, yet little has been revealed about the policy-making process for assisted emigration. An assessment of the extent to which Elliot influenced policy and how his influence was derived will provide a new vantage point from which to view innovative government.

The relationship between the development of assisted emigration and the widening responsibility of government is important. Following the decision by the British government in the 1830s to undertake the management of emigration, new administrative methods and frameworks had to be established. MacDonagh used his case study of nineteenth-century passenger acts to 'elucidate...the operation of certain pressures and tendencies working in the early and mid nineteenth century towards the development of the modern state; and to establish...some principles of governmental

³⁶ P. Buckner, 'The Colonial Office and British North America 1801-1850', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, viii (Toronto, 1985), p. xxxi.

³⁷ Haines, 'Government-Assisted Emigration', p. vii.

growth in this period'.³⁸ He depicted administrative change and social legislation as self-generating and largely free from external forces, and particularly from Benthamite influences. MacDonagh was concerned particularly with emigrant protection, therefore his 'model' for government growth is especially relevant to this thesis. But there are contradictions in MacDonagh's explanation. His depiction of administrative change is flawed. For example, on the one hand MacDonagh argued that bureaucratic development was free from external forces. While on the other hand he considered that the pressures generated by Lord Durham's investigations in Canada, in which he was aided by *colonial reformers, Buller and Wakefield*, and the subsequent report in 1839, were 'partially responsible' for the establishment of the CLEC 'which led to immediate improvements in the field of emigrant protection'.³⁹

MacDonagh's work in this respect was important, not least for the historical discussion it initiated.⁴⁰ Other historians were critical of the 'ideas, opinion, and especially Benthamism being written out of history'.⁴¹ Dunkley declared that MacDonagh had failed to consider motivation for change from within the Colonial Office. This, he argued, was where the main impetus for further centralization of

³⁸ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government*, p.15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 136; p. 138.

⁴⁰ For example, Henry Parris, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal Reappraised', *The Historical Journal*, 3, (1960), pp.17-37; J. Hart, 'Nineteenth-Century Social Reform: A Tory Interpretation of History', *Past and Present*, 31 (1965), pp. 39-61; Gillian Sutherland (ed.) *Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth-Century Government* (London, 1972); S.E. Finer, 'The Transmission of Benthamite Ideas', in Sutherland (ed.), *Growth of Nineteenth-Century Government*, pp. 11-32; Peter Dunkley, 'Emigration and the State, 1803-1842: The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, 23, (1980), pp. 353-80; Alan Heesom, 'The Coal Mines Act of 1842, Social Reform, and Social Control', *The Historical Journal*, 24, (1981), pp. 69-88.

⁴¹ Roy MacLeod, 'Statesmen Undisguised', *The American Historical Review*, 78, (1973), p. 1391.

emigration and administration came. Assumptions about the method of government, he insisted, must address the question of Benthamite ideas in the emigration service.⁴² Sutherland argued that ‘simple pragmatism’ did not explain everything.⁴³ She cited the role of other factors in government growth including strong personalities in government departments; the function of experts as innovators and agents of administrative and legislative change. MacLeod suggested a research programme for administrative history, in which he argued that inert materials (government records) could be given vitality ‘when the faceless image of administration is given flesh and colour’. As civil servants and their associates were crucial to innovative bureaucracy, he believed future research should illuminate how innovations could be ‘encouraged or resisted’. Furthermore, MacLeod was clear - no study of the effect of ideas in administration could be wholly successful without taking into account ‘the relationship between permanent officials, their own beliefs and their political leaders’.⁴⁴

Before this study, little has been known or written of Elliot’s beliefs. Historians have made assumptions about Elliot using evidence drawn from his official correspondence or the meagre statements scattered sparingly in contemporaries’ memoirs.⁴⁵ Valuable as these sources are, they have failed to reveal the intellectual and philosophical aspects of Elliot. This is a significant gap in historical understanding of the influences which shaped Australian emigration and colonial administration, which if addressed will help answer outstanding historical questions. What was the

⁴² Dunkley, ‘Emigration and the State’, pp. 355, 368, 377.

⁴³ Sutherland, *Growth of Nineteenth-Century Government*, p.3.

⁴⁴ MacLeod, ‘Statesmen Undisguised’, pp.1387-1405.

⁴⁵ For example, C.C.F. Greville, *The Greville Memoirs: first part*, vol. iii (London, 1887); Henry Taylor, *Autobiography*, 2 vols. (London, 1885).

nature of Elliot's relationship with colonial reformers and philosophical radicals? Can this relationship shed further light on the way government-assisted emigration developed? Was emigration policy shaped by Benthamite principles?

Clearly there are various directions in which knowledge of administration of government-assisted emigration during the period 1831-1855 can be extended. Using Elliot's career as a means to explore the developments which occurred in the movement of thousands of Britain's population to the Australian colonies at this time, plainly raises a number of historical questions. The key source material with which to answer these questions is gathered from a range of sources.

Any study of administration of government-assisted emigration must in the first instance turn to official records. It is from these documents that the essence of government action can be gleaned. For this reason, previous research on assisted emigration policy, colonial administration and Elliot's role within emigration has drawn heavily from the Colonial Office records. This vast collection includes registers of correspondence, original correspondence, colonial despatches, and entry books. Both Madgwick and Hitchins relied heavily on these records. Colonial Office records provided Haines with valuable material for her research, but these were complemented by other evidence such as shipping records, and emigrant memoirs, which were unavailable to earlier historians. This combination of sources enabled Haines to throw more light on the characteristics of assisted emigrants. David Macmillan's detailed study of early Scottish commercial enterprise in Australia utilised colonial records to briefly examine Elliot's role in large-scale emigration from Scotland to Australia

during the 1840s. Even as new material becomes available, the Colonial Office records remain an important source.

The voluminous nature of these records is in itself a problem for researchers. The categorisation of the collection⁴⁶ does provide some direction for researchers. There are, for example, volumes devoted to emigration. Particularly useful for this study were Elliot's letterbooks during his time as Agent-General, and the correspondence of the CLEC. But the nature of emigration was such that relevant correspondence, minutes, memoranda and despatches do not always fall neatly into one category. Emigration material may be found in the volumes of original correspondence from individual colonies. Also useful for this study were manuscripts pertaining to the establishment and organisation of the Colonial Office itself. Information relating to the establishment and organization of Elliot's office and the Colonial Office is, however, noticeably incomplete and at times sketchy. This is no doubt a result of the poor physical conditions in which the documents were stored in the Colonial Office building during most of the nineteenth century.⁴⁷

The value of the official records lies in the fact that they paint a detailed picture of the policy, process, and problems of assisted emigration. Despite the bureaucratic

⁴⁶ For example, volumes are divided into categories such as original correspondence, register of out letters, entry books for each colony.

⁴⁷ The Colonial Office was until the 1870s housed in 13 and 14 Downing Street. It was in a dilapidated condition. The offices were overcrowded and there were huge cracks in the external walls, which were shored up with external timber supports. Many of the rooms were damp and the basement was continually flooding, so a water pump was in constant operation. As some documents were stored in the basement, many did not survive. In addition, because of the overcrowded conditions, many were scattered around the building in a haphazard manner. For a detailed account of the work and organization of the Colonial Office including its physical condition see, D.M. Young, *The Colonial Office in the early nineteenth century* (London, 1961); Charles Eyre Pascoe, *No. 10, Downing Street, Whitehall: Its History and Associations* (London, 1908). A photograph is included in Appendix 1.

arrangement and character of the correspondence, there is a more informal side to the records. Letters between intending emigrants or Poor Law officers and the emigration department bring a distinct personal dimension to the sources. Here the humanitarian aspect of emigration is exposed and can be examined as personal circumstances and concerns of emigrants are juxtaposed with official documents. Correspondence and despatches between the colonies and the Colonial Office not only enlighten the reader on the mechanics of emigration but also expose the tensions which arose between London and colonial authorities. Internal memoranda and minutes reveal aspects of government responsibility ranging from the policy-making process to the cost of furnishing the new office of the Agent-General for Emigration. The major defect is the lack of correspondence between senior officials and secretaries of state classified as 'private and confidential', or 'secret'. It was usual practice for such correspondence to be removed from the official records and taken by the outgoing Secretary of State. Consequently some correspondence which might have shed light on decisions about policy-making is absent, and researchers must turn to other sources.

Imperial historians have frequently turned to parliamentary papers as sources for their research. These remain a valuable and indispensable tool for the study of government and colonial administration. Reports from select committee on emigration and colonization, general reports of the Agent-General for Emigration and the CLEC, reports, returns correspondence and papers relating to emigration, colonial dispatches and enclosures provide a mass of information which offer an insight into the day-to-day administration of emigration. The reliability of this material, however, must be

viewed with caution. P.A.M. Taylor advised that figures and statistics in parliamentary papers 'should not be accepted without question'.⁴⁸ More importantly, some select committees often framed questions in such a way that they prompted the response they sought. Furthermore, there existed interdepartmental correspondence that was never printed for Parliament. A major drawback therefore, is that policy decisions are available in print, but that much of the background and detail that lay behind these decisions was omitted.⁴⁹ It is important, therefore, that parliamentary papers are used in conjunction with other non-parliamentary sources.

Private papers of Colonial Office ministers and other civil servants provide further information. The Grey papers are particularly informative. As Viscount Howick, later the 3rd Earl Grey,⁵⁰ was Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies at the inception of assisted emigration⁵¹ and returned as Secretary of State from July 1846 to February 1852, his papers yield much useful material on emigration and Elliot's role. Unfortunately, there is gap in Howick's private journals from November 1830 until March 1833, which means that material illuminating the work of the Emigration Commissioners at the inception of assisted emigration is limited.⁵² Letters and memoranda between Howick and parliamentary and permanent officials in the Colonial Office and colonial reformers yield crucial detail about other aspects of

⁴⁸ P.A.M. Taylor, 'Emigration', in D.V. Glass & P.A.M. Taylor, *Population and Emigration*, (Dublin, 1976), pp. 23-99.

⁴⁹ See for example developments in passenger protection as detailed in MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 257-65.

⁵⁰ Howick succeeded to the Earldom on 17 July 1845.

⁵¹ Howick's first period of office was Nov. 1830 - April 1833.

⁵² This period of Howick's connection with emigration is referred to in Earl Grey, *The Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration* (London, 1853, reprinted New York 1970), see Letter VII, pp. 303-45.

colonization. There is also much to be learned about Howick's attitude to Elliot's professional ability. Papers of other ministers shed further light on the business of emigration. Some disclose important evidence⁵³ but the irregular nature of the survival and organisation of other collections⁵⁴ for the purpose of this thesis restrict their value. The papers of James Stephen were especially disappointing. Although they were helpful in the area of his relationship with colonial reformers, what remains of the collection has been edited and in places rewritten⁵⁵ by his daughter. This obviously affects the value of the papers as a primary source.

Other collections, some of which have been well utilised by historians,⁵⁶ were also productive. Some private papers proved more difficult to trace. Official correspondence and reports of J.D. Pinnock, emigration agent and one of Elliot's greatest critics, were relatively easily traced in British and Australian repositories. His personal papers, however, are in private hands. These were an exciting and useful find with which to complement Pinnock's official documents.⁵⁷ Stephen Walcott's papers proved to be another elusive collection. When these were finally traced, they were revealed to be a small collection of letters to Elliot, and were valuable in providing pointers to other lines of enquiry.

⁵³ For example the papers of 4th Earl of Clarendon and Thomas Spring Rice, Lord Monteagle.

⁵⁴ For example, 14th Earl of Derby and the Duke of Richmond.

⁵⁵ Many of Stephen's diaries are missing; those surviving have been edited and rewritten by his daughter Caroline.

⁵⁶ For example, papers of Sir Henry Taylor and Nassau Senior.

⁵⁷ These are held by Mr. Douglas Pinnock, descendent of J. D. Pinnock. They consist of diaries, journals and letters, and are not catalogued. During the 1950s they were consulted by the historian, A.F. Madden, University of Oxford, who was tutor to the present holder's father. Madden deposited some notes with the papers. They have not been consulted again until the present study.

New lines of inquiry are greatly aided by the use of Elliot's private papers, which have been neglected by historians.⁵⁸ Previous constructions of Elliot's connections with emigration have been based on official government and colonial correspondence and parliamentary papers. These remain an important source of information, but Elliot's papers offer the opportunity to explore new lines of enquiry relevant to his career. His papers form part of the archives of the Elliots, Earls of Minto, held at the National Library of Scotland.

Although Elliot's papers are comparatively limited in quantity, they are rich in quality and substance. They include private and official correspondence, journals, diaries and miscellaneous papers and offer the opportunity for a more detailed and wide-ranging appraisal of Elliot's role in Australian emigration than has previously been possible. The diaries are particularly valuable in illuminating Elliot's *milieu*.

His family connections were well known, but his diaries have revealed his previously unknown associations with eminent Victorians. The surviving diaries are pocket sized, therefore they contain little detail. What they do reveal, however, whether by a single name or simple phrase, is that he counted among his close friends those of influence in government and colonial affairs, philosophical radicals, colonial reformers, and eminent intellectual and literary figures of the day. By pursuing the trail from the diaries to manuscripts and papers of some of his notable friends and colleagues, important new perspectives of Elliot have emerged. Examination of this

⁵⁸ The papers were presented to the National Library of Scotland in two deposits – in 1967 and 1977.

social network contributes significantly to illumination of Elliot's well-spring of influence and tenets.

The approach of this thesis has been to employ the neglected source of Elliot's papers together with government records, parliamentary papers and private papers of government ministers. Owing to the diverse character and wide limits of emigration and colonial administration there will remain some uncertainties and conjecture, but exploitation of the primary sources in conjunction with existing interpretations will offer convincing answers to questions about the development of administration of government-assisted emigration.

Brief biographical details of Elliot

This thesis is not a biography of Elliot. But as some historians have tended to consult incomplete secondary sources for Elliot's biographical details, a number of inaccuracies and misconceptions have arisen. Some biographical perspectives and personal details, therefore, will help to provide a more authentic picture of Elliot.

Elliot was born in 1808, the youngest son of the Right Honourable Hugh Elliot, brother to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 1st Earl of Minto.⁵⁹ The Minto clan was a titled Scottish family, with extensive Whig connections⁶⁰ and a long tradition of public and colonial service. Elliot's father's appointment as Governor of Madras in 1814 resulted in Elliot spending the formative years of his childhood, until 1820, in India. While

⁵⁹ See Family Tree in Appendix 2. For other genealogical details of the Minto and Elliot family see G.F.S. Elliot, *The Border Elliots & the Family of Minto* (1897); Nina, Countess of Minto, *A memoir of the Right Hon. Hugh Elliot* (Edinburgh, 1868).

⁶⁰ Elliot's father also had influential connections within the Tories.

there he learned Latin and Greek and acquired 'more knowledge of the ancient languages than usual at my age'. He was largely self-taught, although his elder brother Henry did contribute to his education and tutored him in mathematics. Elliot considered that he had been fortunate in experiencing the contrasts of India and England at so young an age, and resulted in him being taught 'liberality'.⁶¹ Following his return to England he attended Harrow school from 1821 to 1825.⁶² Elliot recalled that these four years at Harrow were tedious and that the only benefit was in getting to know the boys.

Among his contemporaries at Harrow were some who in later years would have significance for Elliot's career. Herman Merivale and Archibald Acheson both entered Harrow in the same academic year as Elliot. Merivale became permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office following the retirement of James Stephen and worked closely with Elliot. As well as colleagues they were friends who frequented the same social and intellectual gatherings. Acheson was youngest son of Lord Gosford, whom Elliot accompanied to Canada in 1835 as secretary to the Gosford Commission. Charles Buller, colonial reformer and follower of Wakefield became a vocal and persistent critic of colonial policy during the 1830s and 1840s, was a fellow pupil of Elliot's, although their paths crossed only briefly. The extent of their friendship remains speculative.

Little is known about Elliot's academic achievements during his time at Harrow, as the only surviving school records for these years are school registers.

⁶¹ Elliot memoir, n.d. July 1828, Elliot papers, MS 19432/176.

⁶² Harrow School records and registers 1820-25; Notes by Elliot 28 July, n.d., Elliot papers, MS 19432/176.

Elliot did not attend university.⁶³ The reason for this is not readily apparent. One possibility is that family financial circumstances prevented him from doing so.⁶⁴ Another is that his father was not enamoured of universities. He had not enjoyed his time at Oxford and felt the tutors and students there were idle and bigoted.⁶⁵ Perhaps Elliot merely had no interest in, or the ability for higher academic study. His lack of higher education however is significant, as it is likely that it prevented him from attaining higher office.⁶⁶

Elliot joined the Colonial Office in 1825 as a junior clerk. As patronage was the usual method of acquiring such positions, Elliot's connections with the Minto family would undoubtedly have secured him this appointment. If the Minto name did not open doors to him, he could also claim family ties with another influential dynasty - the Eden family. His father's sister, Eleanor, was wife of William Eden, First Lord Auckland. Both families maintained close contact. Elliot's cousin George Eden, later first Earl of Auckland, held several influential government offices, including President of the Board of Trade and First Lord of the Admiralty.

While patronage secured his career as a civil servant, it was his ability which helped his advancement in the service. He was appointed précis writer in 1827. Prior to this he had dealt mostly with Australia and British North America, but in his new

⁶³ MacDonagh is mistaken in his repeated references to Elliot's legal education and training, see for example *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 333.

⁶⁴ Elliot's father had several periods during which he had financial difficulties. On more than one occasion he lost a great deal of money at gambling.

⁶⁵ Countess of Minto, *Memoir*, pp. 10-12.

⁶⁶ Those who achieved office as Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office during the period of Elliot's career had all read law at university.

position he ‘acquired some knowledge of them [British colonies] all’.⁶⁷ In 1831 he was appointed secretary to the Emigration Commissioners, and by 1832 the sole management of emigration schemes during this period lay with him, until in the following year he was appointed senior clerk to the British North America Department. He travelled to Quebec two years later as secretary to Lord Gosford’s Commission of Inquiry into Canadian affairs. On his return from Canada he assumed the duties of Agent-General for Emigration in April 1837. This post he held for three years, *after which he became one of three commissioners of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (CLEC), and subsequently chairman.*⁶⁸

Both the department of the Agent-General and the CLEC were bureaux of the Colonial Office. In 1847 when the retirement of James Stephen prompted reorganization of the Colonial Office, Elliot was promoted to permanent Assistant Under-Secretary for the colonies. This was the pinnacle of his career. Although he described his appointment as ‘perfectly satisfactory’,⁶⁹ there is little doubt that he would have been hoping to follow in Stephen’s tracks. Instead Herman Merivale was brought into the Colonial Office, also as Assistant Under-Secretary in 1847 and several months later took over as permanent Under-Secretary. Bringing Merivale into the Office initially on the same level as Elliot was possibly a strategic move by Elliot’s superiors to ‘soften the blow’ of putting an end to Elliot’s aspirations. Another

⁶⁷ Report of Select Committee of Colonization for Ireland, Minutes of Evidence, evidence by Elliot, 1847, *B.P.P. (737) VI.1*, p.3.

⁶⁸ From the early days of the CLEC Elliot was regarded as the senior commissioner. However he was not officially made chairman until June 1846. Colonial Office memorandum to Commissioners 6 June, 1846, CO 384/77.

⁶⁹ Elliot to Clarendon, 20 Nov. 1847, MS Clarendon Dep. Irish box 11.

opportunity for advancement arose for Elliot in 1860 when Merivale resigned from his post. Elliot pressed his claim strongly but was overlooked by the Duke of Newcastle in favour of Frederic Rogers.⁷⁰ Elliot was destined to remain as Assistant Under-Secretary until his retirement in 1868.

Relevant to family connections and his career is Elliot's personal wealth. His financial circumstances enabled him to move in elite and influential circles. As the youngest son and one of ten children,⁷¹ Elliot would not have expected to inherit a significant share of his father's estate.⁷² Moreover, due to Hugh Elliot's frequent financial crises, it is unlikely that his estate would have been of considerable worth. Nor is it likely that Elliot inherited much wealth from his mother, who was described as being of 'humble birth'.⁷³ It appears therefore, that Elliot had to rely largely on his own resources. On joining the Colonial Office as a junior clerk, his salary was relatively modest. But as his career progressed, his salary improved significantly. As chairman of the CLEC he was earning £1,000 per annum and this increased to

⁷⁰ Elliot had suggested splitting the salary of the Under and Assistant Secretary posts and suggested himself for the higher post. Newcastle was anxious to show his appreciation of Elliot's work but felt that Rogers was a more appropriate choice, although no reason was indicated. Arbuthnot to Gladstone, 4 April 1860, Gladstone papers, MS 44096. Rogers, who had been Assistant Under-Secretary until 1846, had been expected to take over as Under-Secretary from Stephen in 1847. However evidently the 3rd Earl Grey did not think Rogers possessed the 'aptitude for dealing with large masses of business'. Rogers believed Grey wanted 'rid' of him. See Rogers to Miss Rogers, 28 May, 1846; Rogers to Mrs. Rogers, 20 Dec. 1846, in G.E. Marindin (ed.) *Letters of Frederic Lord Blachford Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies* (London, 1896) pp. 130-2. Rogers' later promotion to Under-secretary may have been in some measure a gesture to recompense Rogers for his previous disappointment. But Rogers also had the advantage of legal training and qualifications which Elliot lacked.

⁷¹ Two of whom were to Hugh Elliot's first wife, whom he divorced.

⁷² The author has been unable to establish the value of Hugh Elliot's estate.

⁷³ Countess of Minto, *Memoir*, p.338.

£1,500 following his appointment as Assistant Under-Secretary.⁷⁴ This latter remuneration was a substantial sum and placed him on a par with the parliamentary Under-Secretary.

Other pointers offer further clues to his financial status. Following his marriage to Jane Perry,⁷⁵ daughter of James Perry, former editor and proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle*, the Elliots lived in Chapel Street, Belgrave Square. Their home was an elegant Georgian townhouse, their address exclusive. From here, they moved to Chesham Place,⁷⁶ a prestigious ‘model village’ development in Belgravia where Elliot counted among his neighbours Lord John Russell and Lord Lansdowne. Here the Elliots undoubtedly enjoyed a lifestyle⁷⁷ commensurate with their affluence. His first wife may well have brought wealth to the marriage, but there appear to be no surviving documents to verify this. Probate records have not revealed an exact figure of Elliot’s personal estate at the time of his death, merely that it was ‘under £14,000.’⁷⁸ But his degree of wealth could not guarantee a successful career.

The Gosford Commission was significant for Elliot. It was a platform for Elliot to display his administrative abilities, which were duly noted by those of

⁷⁴ Elliot’s salaries during his career: 1825-27 junior clerk, £150-300 per annum, 1827-1831 précis writer £300-400, 1833-1837 Senior Clerk, £600-1000, 1837-40 Agent-General for Emigration £800 - £1000, Commissioner with CLEC £1000, 1847-68 Assistant Under-Secretary, £1500. Sources: J.C. Sainty, *Office-Holders in Modern Britain, vi: Colonial Office Officials* (London, 1976), pp. 2-7; Elliot to Melville, 26 Nov. 1858, Elliot papers MS 19420/43; Stephen to Treasury 9 Jan. and 22 Apr. 1837 CO 384/43; CLEC Report, 8 Aug. 1840, CO 384/62.

⁷⁵ Jane Elliot died in January 1861.

⁷⁶ Elliot originally resided at 37 Chesham Place but later moved to number 13. He remained here until 1865. He then let his house and subsequently rented houses in various locations in London.

⁷⁷ Census returns for 1851 and 1861 indicate they employed servants, whose number varied over the years from five to seven. See also Elliot to Elizabeth Elliot, 13 Mar. 1878, Elliot papers MS 19420/166.

⁷⁸ Probate records dated 25 March 1880 for the will and codicil of T.F. Elliot, dated 8 February 1880. Elliot added the codicil to his will on the day of his second wife’s death. As Elliot had no children from either marriage, his nieces and nephews were the main beneficiaries of his estate.

influence. It was here that he became acquainted with Sir George Gipps, one of the Commissioners. Elliot held Gipps⁷⁹ in high esteem, on both a personal and professional level. In 1837 Gipps was appointed Governor of New South Wales, a posting which brought him immediately into the sphere of emigration and further association with Elliot. Two other of Elliot's acquaintances from his time in Canada was A. H. Engelbach and Stephen Walcott. The former was a clerk, and the latter a secretary with the Gosford Commission. Engelbach became a valued member of Elliot's staff in the Emigration Department and later with the CLEC. Walcott and Elliot were good friends. But Elliot also judged him to be a very efficient and well qualified clerk and approached Nassau Senior to find him employment on his return to London.⁸⁰ Walcott was appointed secretary to the CLEC in 1840.⁸¹ He became a long-serving official in emigration affairs.

As an administrator, Elliot has been described by some historians as being very like Stephen. MacDonagh suggested that one could suppose that some of Elliot's memoranda to members of the corps of emigration officers had been written by Stephen himself.⁸² Any similarity with Stephen undoubtedly ends there, within the confines of Colonial Office correspondence. These two men had very different personalities. Stephen's evangelical background and beliefs are well documented.⁸³ He shunned London society and was critical of the social habits of those 'young

⁷⁹ Gipps had been secretary to Elliot's cousin the 1st Earl of Auckland.

⁸⁰ Elliot to Walcott, 6 Dec. 1837, Walcott fonds, MG24B36/1.

⁸¹ Walcott's name appeared on much of the promotional literature of the CLEC during the 1840s and 1850s.

⁸² MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 125.

⁸³ See for example, Knaplund, *James Stephen*, especially chapter 2; Sir Leslie Stephen, *The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen* (London, 1895).

gentlemen' who worked for him in the Colonial Office. Stephen's private correspondence also reveals him to have been particularly sensitive to criticism and to be persistently complaining about either his colleagues or his treatment by the colonial service.⁸⁴ Elliot, on the other hand, had a lively and charismatic persona 'with quick, brilliant alertness'.⁸⁵ He was undoubtedly an extrovert and exuded self-confidence.⁸⁶ His colleague Henry Taylor described how 'through him [Elliot] I became acquainted with the attractive, strong-hearted, genial, mettlesome race to which he belonged - frank, friendly, luminous, spirited "sons of the morning"'.⁸⁷ His demeanour undoubtedly influenced his approach to work. He was at times outspoken, innovative and notably independent.

Nor does it appear that Elliot had Stephen's complaining or sensitive nature. His correspondence does not reveal that he was persistently or unreasonably critical of colleagues and others with whom he had regular contact. Although on occasions he could be severe in his reprimands.⁸⁸ At various times he came under severe criticism from colonial reformers and Australian colonists. In a memorandum which contained

⁸⁴ See for example, Stephen papers, Add. 7888, I/II/1-53, 78-89, 104-15 and Stephen's journal, 1846, I/II/119.

⁸⁵ Gordon N. Ray (ed.), *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, vol. i, (Cambridge, Mass., 1945), p. cxxvi.

⁸⁶ See comments in Elliot to Taylor, n.d. 1835, Elliot papers, MS 19422 / 1. An incident that occurred at the Colonial Office on 10 April 1848 further illustrates Elliot's extrovert tendencies. The office had been fortified to withstand attack from Chartists. Office doors were guarded, windows blocked with sandbags, the staff issued with carbines. According to Taylor, Elliot, then Assistant Under-Secretary, kept the staff entertained by 'playing out' anecdotes of amateur fighting in the colonies. H. Taylor, *Autobiography*, Vol. i (London, 1885), pp. 35-36. This incident is also referred to by Rogers who described Elliot on this occasion as 'like a man who feels himself in the face of an emergency to which he is equal -- a mixture of a man of business, of presence of mind, of decision, and of light-heartedness'. Rogers to Mozley, 9 Apr. 1848, Marindin, *Letters of Lord Blachford*, p. 135.

⁸⁷ Taylor, *Autobiography*, Vol. i, p. 164.

⁸⁸ For example, Elliot to Friend, 20 June, 1838, CO 384/46.

reflections on the unpopularity of the Colonial Office and the criticism often levelled at it and its permanent official, Elliot pointed to the 'misunderstandings' which occurred during and in the aftermath of the slavery question. It was from this point in time that he believed criticism of the Colonial Office had its foundations. He declared an understanding of the reasons behind the anti-Colonial Office feeling, but it is clear from his reflections that he never took personally any of the criticism directed at him or his department.⁸⁹ This was in stark contrast to Stephen, whose correspondence reveals that he was often distressed by the criticism directed at him.⁹⁰

Broeze described Elliot as 'career-minded'.⁹¹ At first glance this seems an appropriate statement. However, if by this phrase Broeze means 'careerist', some flaws appear. Writing to Taylor from Canada in 1836, Elliot indicated that as the Gosford Commission had severe problems, it was probable that Sir Charles Grey, one of the commissioners, would either resign or be recalled. Elliot was concerned that there was a possibility that he might be called upon to replace Grey. Yet he requested Taylor to make Stephen aware that he would be unwilling to take the post, if offered. His letter suggests that he was concerned to avoid claims of conspiracy among the commissioners which might expose his own character to 'suspicions'.⁹² A further indicator is revealed in another letter to Taylor. Elliot informed his friend that he

⁸⁹ Elliot memorandum, 22 June 1848, Elliot papers, MS 19432/ 74-97.

⁹⁰ See Stephen's correspondence in Stephen papers, Add. 7888 II/118.

⁹¹ Broeze, 'Private Enterprise', p. 235.

⁹² Elliot to Taylor, marked 'Confidential', 29 Jan. 1836, Elliot papers, MS 19421/ 43-6.

would not like permanent employment abroad – not even in the context of higher ‘situations’.⁹³ Neither of these attitudes portrays Elliot as having careerist motives.

If, however, Broeze was intending to depict Elliot merely as career orientated, this is a more realistic picture. He was a conscientious, meticulous and committed civil servant. He expected those who served under him to be the same. But while his career was important to him, unlike Stephen, he did not become a slave to it. Nor did he pursue it to the exclusion of other interests. He made time for his scientific and literary interests. He travelled abroad regularly with family and friends. He did not make his decision to retire in December 1868 lightly, but it was prompted by personal circumstances – his marriage to his second wife.⁹⁴

Elliot never visited the Australian colonies. He did, however, have contacts and connections there. The relationship between Gipps and Elliot has already been noted. But Elliot could claim another link with Gipps – his cousin, Gilbert Elliot, was Gipps’ aide-de-camp. Elliot’s brother Admiral Charles Elliot⁹⁵ had notable friends in Australia, including Governor Sir Henry Young, who named the South Australian town of Port Elliot after him.⁹⁶ His brother-in-law, Charles Perry, was first bishop of Melbourne. There were other members of the Elliot clan who had made the new colonies their home. Therefore, Elliot would be well briefed from private contacts on Australian affairs.

⁹³ Elliot to Taylor, 18 Nov (n.d.), Elliot papers, MS 19422/ 79.

⁹⁴ His second wife was Elizabeth Howe Bromley. His first wife died in January 1861. They were no children from either marriage.

⁹⁵ Admiral Charles Elliot (1801-1875) Governor of Bermuda, of Trinidad and of St. Helena.

⁹⁶ J.C. Tolley, *South Coast Story* (Mt. Compass, S.A., 3rd edition, 1997).

Although Elliot remained involved with Australian interests after 1847, he did have other responsibilities. He returned to Canadian affairs, in which Merivale had little interest. Military expenditure was another area that absorbed much of his time. Upon his retirement, the serving Secretary of State, the Duke of Buckingham, recommended Elliot for the Civil Order of the Bath as he felt:

that having regard to his long and varied services, he [Elliot] was especially one of those to meet whose services the Civil Order of the Bath was established...also that – looking to the important nature of the duties which had devolved upon him – the ability with which they had been discharged, and the fidelity and zeal he had always shown to promote the public service, and to give effect to the views of his principals under whatever Government it was my [Buckingham] duty and a pleasing one to recommend him to the Prime Minister for the honor [sic] of the KCB.⁹⁷

Elliot, however, did not receive the KCB, as there were no vacancies at that time. Instead, he was awarded the Knight Commandership of the St. Michael and St. George (KCMG) the following year.⁹⁸ After his retirement he indulged his love of travel and pursued his interest in science. He was elected vice-president of the Royal Institution of Great Britain in July 1876.⁹⁹ He continued to travel abroad and it was during a visit to Egypt that he and his second wife¹⁰⁰ contacted what was diagnosed as

⁹⁷ Memorandum of Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, 8 Dec. 1868, Elliot papers, MS 19432/174.

⁹⁸ Granville to Queen Victoria, 24 April, 1869, Royal Archives VIC/B25/33; a covenant for the insignia, signed by Elliot, 19 Aug. 1869 is included in CO 447/11; see also details of award in Elliot papers, MS 19421 / 191.

⁹⁹ Entries dated 8 May and 3 July 1876, Minutes of General Meetings of Members of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, RI VIII/ 72, 80.

¹⁰⁰ His first wife had died suddenly in 1861.

typhoid fever from which neither recovered. He died at Shephard's Hotel, Cairo, on 12 February 1880, four days after his wife's death.¹⁰¹ Both he and his wife were buried in Cairo.

This biographical sketch has provided some context for Elliot's life and career. But to give a true reflection of Elliot's role in administering emigration, attention must be directed to larger issues. The purpose of this thesis is to examine assisted emigration to the Australian colonies in the context of Elliot's career, in order to shed further light on state-aided emigration and the development of administrative frameworks during the nineteenth century. It also investigates the degree and nature of the influence Elliot exerted in administering emigration. The period of time selected for the thesis was influenced by circumstances relating both to emigration and to Elliot's career. 1831 is a natural starting point for the work. It was during this year that the Ripon Regulations were introduced which were the genesis of assisted emigration. 1855 may seem an arbitrary choice for the termination of the study. More orthodox approaches for examining nineteenth-century assisted emigration to Australia have used 1850/1 as the cut-off point, being either the year before or the year of the discovery of gold in the colonies.¹⁰² This event prompted spontaneous self-initiated and self-funded emigration on such a scale that unassisted emigration outstripped the government scheme. 1855 however is a notable juncture in Australian history – the year responsible government was introduced into New South Wales,

¹⁰¹ There is a detailed account of the events surrounding Elliot's death in his private papers: Elliot papers, MS 19432 / 258.

¹⁰² For example, Madgwick, *Immigration*; Broeze, 'Private Enterprise', Schultz, 'Immigration'.

Victoria, and Van Diemen's Land. After these events, colonies themselves began to take over responsibility for assisted immigration. The choice of 1855 was also influenced by Elliot's role in the development of passenger legislation which culminated in the Passenger Act of 1855.

The structure of the thesis is thematic. Chapter 1 provides context for the thesis and considers Elliot's role in the inception of government-assisted emigration and the early experiments in schemes for female emigration. This was a crucial stage in Elliot's career in which he gained his first experience of the business of government-directed emigration. Chapter 2 is concerned with Elliot's role as a colonial administrator. It examines his style of administration and pragmatic aspects of his role and how this affected recruitment and selection of emigrants. It also considers Elliot's attempts to reconcile the needs of the colonies with prevailing social and economic conditions in Britain. Chapter 3 examines contemporary statements and historical debates concerning the quality and suitability of the emigrants who were assisted to the Australian colonies.

As the number of emigrants travelling to the colonies increased dramatically, there was demand for the greater protection of passengers. Chapter 4, therefore, addresses the issue of the welfare of emigrants. It assesses Elliot's commitment to reforming and securing uniformity in interpretation and application of the passengers acts in order to remedy abuses and negligence within the emigration system. Chapters 5 and 6 examine Elliot's influence in formulating policy for the development of assisted emigration. The relationship between Elliot and colonial reformers is scrutinised, and consideration is given to Elliot's intellectual and philosophical

persuasions. Each chapter provides a different perspective on Elliot's association with government-assisted emigration. Each chapter also contributes to debates and issues that are significant both to emigration history and administrative history. Together they offer new interpretations of state-directed emigration and present a more complete picture of Elliot than has yet been produced.

Chapter 1

Early experiments in government-assisted emigration

During a century identified with the ascendancy of liberal concepts of *laissez-faire* and free trade, it seems remarkable that nineteenth-century state-aided emigration schemes, which involved considerable government intervention and human engineering, emerged as acceptable methods of directing emigrants from Britain to her colonies. The experimental state-aided emigration of the 1820s and 1830s generated a collectivist, bureaucratic framework in which government, local institutions and commerce co-ordinated their activities to deliver willing members of the labouring classes to the British colonies of Australia and British North America. The context within which these schemes were conceived provides an opportunity to identify areas of conflict and debate which were to dominate emigration until the end of the 1840s. Furthermore, it throws light on Elliot's earliest connections with emigration and reveals crucial areas of policy and practice that influenced subsequent emigration policy and that also generated problematic areas of administration with which Elliot had to deal.

Until 1831 the Australian colonies had not been seriously considered as a destination to which emigrants from the labouring classes would be attracted. A modest number of 'capitalists'¹ had sought new areas for entrepreneurial investment in the Antipodes, but the sheer distance and high cost of passage, particularly when compared with British North America, proved to be too great for potential self-financing emigrants from the labouring population. In addition,

¹ Howick used this term in reports and correspondence. See for example Howick to Arthur, 13 Dec. 1831, GRE/B/144/1; Sketch of a Proposal for Colonising Australiasia, n.d., GRE pam.303.

land policies in Australia were highly exclusive. Prior to 1831 free grants of land were available, but they were only given to those settlers whom the authorities considered had sufficient capital. The number of free settlers arriving in the Australian colonies before 1831 was therefore, relatively small and consisted largely of members of gentry families, the middle classes and occasionally younger sons of the minor aristocracy. The perceived decline of the old trading companies in the East and West Indies is believed to have encouraged these speculators from the 'nobler classes' to exploit new circumstances by accessing grants of colonial land in the Antipodes. Middle class entrepreneurs followed suit.² The schemes which emerged during the third and fourth decades of the century, however, changed the pattern of emigration from Britain to Australia. Alongside the forced emigration by transportation, and voluntary emigration of capitalists and emigrants who were assisted by private means, a new type of immigrant was introduced into the Australian colonies – the government-assisted immigrant.

Britain's prevailing economic and social conditions were critical to the government schemes introduced during the late 1820s and early 1830s. Industrialisation had brought great economic and social problems. As the process of transformation from an agricultural and mercantile economy to one based predominantly on manufacture continued, the difficulties of cyclical and structural depression, unemployment, poverty, social unrest, the rising cost of poor relief and the fear of overpopulation needed to be addressed. In addition to the chronic and permanent economic distress of Southern England and Ireland, was the periodic and recurrent unemployment in the manufacturing districts of England

² D. Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857* (Melbourne, London and New York, 1957), p. 39.

and central Scotland. The sharp economic boom during the period 1821-25 with abundant harvests, cheap food and general prosperity, was brought to an abrupt halt by the slump of 1826. The aftermath of the Napoleonic wars had aggravated the situation and brought considerable economic upheaval to the United Kingdom. The widespread unemployment which resulted from the loss of military orders for manufacturing industries was exacerbated by the discharge of the armed forces. The national debt had increased dramatically. Successive harvest failures brought the threat of famine. These matters put further strain on provision for poor relief, which was already under considerable pressure from widespread pauperism, and ratepayers were becoming increasingly anxious about the rising cost of the poor rates. Depression and its concomitants spread general gloom and led to a revived interest in the theory of over population. Government-assisted emigration emerged as a potential remedy. It was put forward by some economists and politicians as the only practicable means by which redundant and surplus population could be absorbed and superfluous capital utilised effectively.

The nature of economic distress found in Ireland was unlike that in England. But there were significant considerations linking the two countries. The destitute Irish labourers and their families turned to England as a panacea for their distress. Irish migrants flowed steadily into England. These immigrants added to the problems of poverty and poor law relief in England. Emigration, therefore, was identified as a two-fold remedy for economic distress. Not only would it help relieve the surplus of labour in England, but it could also be used to redirect Irish migration.

Malthus and his demographic theory of over-population³ added to the anxiety of economists and ministers. He warned that unless population was checked its rate of growth was faster than that of the means of subsistence. Decennial census returns confirmed that population was increasing rapidly. Where in the eighteenth century increasing population had been viewed as the strength of the nation,⁴ overpopulation was now considered a potential weakness which could provoke economic, social and political tensions.

Growing radicalism among the lower classes was also of concern to the government, particularly when it manifested itself as political agitation and incitement to riots such as the Swing Riots of 1830-31. Ministers feared that there existed a potential explosive situation and assisted emigration was identified as a way of relieving the pressure which, if allowed to continue to build, might prompt more serious disturbances and perhaps even revolution.

The leading advocate of emigration during this period was Robert Wilmot Horton, parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. During the 1820s his schemes attracted attention and debate. His promotion of emigration was greatly influenced by Malthus's version of the wage-fund theory. Wages are governed by supply and demand for labour and therefore by the working capital available in relation to the working population. If the work force grows faster than available capital, wages fall. Horton argued that as these wages tend towards the subsistence level, the situation leads to pauperism.⁵ For Horton, the remedy was to remove the excess labour by government-assisted emigration to the colonies; in this instance to Canada. Assisted emigrants had to be completely

³ T.R. Malthus. *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798; 1803).

⁴ R.C. Mills, *The Colonization of Australia (1829-42)*, p. 25.

⁵ D. Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies* (London, 1965), p. 52.

destitute and only those who ‘ardently desired’ to go would be considered⁶ – there was to be no coercion. Horton calculated that the cost of assisting working-class families to emigrate could be balanced by the savings made in the costs of poor relief of the parishes from which the emigrants originated.⁷

Funding was crucial to the success of the proposed scheme, and Horton suggested that the government should make loans available to parishes, with security being provided by a mortgage on the poor rates. In Scotland and Ireland, where no Poor Law was in place, he hoped that security for the loan could be provided by public subscription.⁸ A secondary benefit noted by Horton was that such emigration schemes would not only supply population for defence of the colonies, but also provide prosperity in the colonies themselves which would generate wealth and resources for Britain.⁹ He looked for a solution which could make ‘the redundant labour and the curse of the mother-country, the active labour and the blessing of the colonies’.¹⁰

Schemes for emigration to Canada along the lines recommended by Horton operated in 1823¹¹ and 1825. Following these experiments, Horton succeeded in gaining parliamentary consent for the appointment of two select committees under his chairmanship to consider the whole question of emigration. The first met in 1826 and the second in 1827 with Malthus as the chief witness.

⁶ Mills, *Colonization*, p. 32.

⁷ Costs would include the expense of the passage and the funds necessary for the emigrant to be established in agriculture in the colony.

⁸ Horton later hoped that emigrants would repay some of the costs of his passage. Assisted emigrants also had to relinquish all claims for relief in the parish which funded them, should they return.

⁹ ‘Outline of a Plan of Emigration’, in *Report of the Select Committee on the Employment of the Poor in Ireland*, 1823, *B.P.P.* 1823, VI, p. 331

¹⁰ R.J.W. Horton, *An inquiry into the causes and remedies of Pauperism in the United Kingdom considered*, i (London, 1829), p.34; Mills, *Colonization*, p. 30.

¹¹ Part of the £15,000 grant made by Parliament for the 1823 scheme was used for emigration to the Cape, see Mills, *Colonization*, p. 37.

Both committees supported an emigration solution to the prevailing economic and social problems. On the strength of the favourable reports produced by the committees, Horton introduced two bills into Parliament to enable parishes to mortgage their poor rates to fund assisted emigration - the first in 1828, the second in 1830. Lacking parliamentary support, however, both bills were defeated.¹²

Despite these parliamentary setbacks, Horton's ideas and proposals received support from a number of classical political economists. Of particular significance is Nassau Senior. He countered the arguments put forward by some of Horton's critics - that emigration would only create a vacuum that would be inevitably filled by further population growth. Senior was critical of some aspects of Horton's proposals, but he collaborated with Horton to produce a pamphlet on assisted emigration. Senior argued that parishes should be legally empowered to fund assisted emigration. Such a scheme would, he believed, relieve distress in agricultural areas of England and Wales. Removal of redundant population by assisted emigration would provide a breathing space. Senior remained steadfast in his beliefs in the benefits of assisted emigration and when he was helping to draw up the Poor Law Amendment Bill which was introduced into Parliament in 1834, he included provision for parish-assisted emigration. Section sixty-two of the

¹² Prior to 1827 Horton had received significant support from Tories such as Wellington and Peel. Horton did not resign with his colleagues following the collapse of the Liverpool ministry in April 1827 but became a 'Canningite'. The Tories returned to power in Jan. 1828 and Horton found himself out of favour with his former Tory colleagues. For further details see W.F. Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World from 1815 to the Famine* (London, 1932) pp. 275 passim; also R.N. Ghosh, 'The Colonization Controversy: R.J. Wilmot-Horton and the Classical Economists' in A.G.L. Shaw (ed.), *Great Britain and the Colonies 1815-1865* (London, 1970), pp. 110-41.

Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) empowered English and Welsh parishes to raise or borrow money against the security of the poor rates to pay for poor people to emigrate to the non-tropical British colonies.

The vulnerability of Horton's schemes, which attracted criticism from some political economists, parliamentarians and other interested parties, lay in that they were primarily concerned with the needs of the mother country. He sought to relieve Britain of its burdensome redundant labourers with little thought or consideration for colonial interest. In addition, the overwhelming feeling among members of parliament was that public funds should not be spent on emigration. State-aided emigration, therefore, was eschewed. Voluntary emigration and that assisted by private, philanthropic means appeared to be the only politically and economically acceptable means of directing redundant population to the colonies.

Although Horton's schemes were short-lived, he had succeeded in drawing public attention to emigration. But as contemporaries identified his type of emigration as merely 'shovelling out paupers', the stigma attached to government-assisted emigration proved to be difficult to shrug off. Elliot would find that throughout his career he was continually having to defend his management of emigration schemes against charges of simply ridding Britain of its paupers – a legacy left by Horton.

Despite the failure of Horton's emigration bills, the Ripon Regulations of November 1831 sanctioned government-assisted emigration to the Australian colonies -financed from land sales. How had this turn around been achieved so quickly? And why was the emigration directed to Australia? To address these questions, consideration must be given to two key topics: first, the socio-

economic conditions in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land; second, the attitude of Howick as the new Under-Secretary of State for War and the Colonies and the influence of a relatively small number of colonial reformers, who came to be known as the 'theorists of 1830'.

While the context for Horton's state-assisted emigration schemes was Britain's economic and social problems, the interaction of socio-economic requirements of both Britain and the colonies provided the circumstances from which early emigration policy for the Australian colonies developed. Two key requirements of the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land were instrumental in the formulation of emigration policy during the early 1830s – the need for male labourers and female settlers.

The shortage of labour was acute. Throughout the 1820s, New South Wales had attracted an increasing number of small capitalists. Most had made effective and profitable use of the convict labour available in the penal colony. As entrepreneurial ventures prospered and expanded, the initial need was met by more transportees. But it became apparent that availability of convict labour could not keep up with demand. In addition, the social and political problems associated with an 'artificial' colony dominated by convicts, ex-convicts and their off-spring came to be recognized. By 1830, there was an urgent need for immigrant labourers. The pastoral industry in particular was expanding rapidly. The success of wool production, especially in New South Wales, strengthened the economy, but exposed the shortage of shepherds and 'mechanics'. As settlement began to spread further inland, the need for this class of workers became acute. This inland invasion created a further problem – that of unlawful trespass. Pastoralists had spread beyond the legal bounds of settlement and were actually

‘squatting’ on Crown land. These circumstances generated an urgent need for changes in immigration and land policies.

Women were also in short supply. The penal origins of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land had produced an in-built sexual imbalance, whereby female convicts and colonists were greatly out-numbered by men. The number of free immigrants arriving before 1831 either privately aided or self-financed was small and male dominated. This bias in emigrants was not exclusive to the Australian colonies. Traditionally, women were less willing to emigrate than their male counterparts, and this was especially so during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹³ But the male preponderance was more conspicuous in the Australian colonies. Convict origins had laid the foundation for a society in which females were greatly outnumbered and the distance and danger of the long passage discouraged many women from venturing to the Antipodes. The colonial administrators, free settlers, and emancipists were continually highlighting the need for female settlers – preferably single, of marriageable material, and of child-bearing age. For many, government-assisted immigration was the answer. As Oxley and Richards argued, the inauguration of assisted immigration from the early 1830s provided the opportunity to ‘redesign the population’¹⁴ of the Australian colonies.

While the pressing needs of both Britain and the colonies were instrumental in the development of colonial land and emigration policies from 1831, the role of Howick and the influence of colonial reformers were crucial to the new initiatives. The new Whig ministry of 1830 brought an open mind to

¹³ D. Oxley and E. Richards, ‘Convict women and assisted female immigrants compared: 1841 – a turning point?’ in E. Richards, R. Reid & D. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Visible Immigrants: Neglected Sources for the History of Australian Immigration* (Canberra, 1989), pp. 1-57.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

emigration. Howick, responsible for reviewing emigration and colonial land administration, concluded that 'a system more entirely contrary to both reason and experience...was never yet devised'.¹⁵ He was convinced that a reformed land system was a prerequisite for any acceptable assisted emigration schemes. Faced with the urgent problem of acute economic and social distress, the new Whig ministry was more receptive to initiatives aimed at relieving the prevailing privations. Howick became the instigator of new Colonial Office regulations influenced by the ideas and theories of the colonial reformers- particularly those of Edward Gibbon Wakefield.¹⁶

Horton had led the emigration debate of the 1820s, but it was Wakefield and his followers who dominated discussion of the rationale of emigration and colonization during the 1830s and 1840s with his theory of systematic colonization. His views were initially expounded in *A Sketch of a Proposal for Colonizing Australia* (1829) and in a series of letters published in the *Morning Chronicle* between August and October 1829, professing to be written by a settler in New South Wales. The work was completed while Wakefield was languishing in Newgate gaol following his abduction of an heiress.¹⁷ These were subsequently edited and published by Robert Gouger under Gouger's name as *A Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town of Australia* (1829). Wakefield proposed a comprehensive scheme of emigration, in which Britain's economic and social pressures would be relieved by the excess population being channelled to the new colonies. This new source of labour would aid the colonies' economic

¹⁵ Howick to Horton, n.d. Jan. 1831, Catton Papers, unsorted letters.

¹⁶ The debate surrounding the influence of the Wakefieldian, the colonial reformers and Howick will be discussed in detail in chapter six.

¹⁷ For biographical details of Wakefield see P. Bloomfield, *Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Builder of the British Commonwealth* (London, 1961) and A.J. Harrop, *The Amazing Career of Edward Gibbon Wakefield* (London, 1928).

development. In addition to problems of overpopulation and redundancy of labour, Britain was also experiencing a surfeit of capital which resulted in limited investment opportunities. Despite technological advances in many industries, profits were low and capitalists were under pressure to either let their capital lie idle or to chance it on speculative ventures.¹⁸ Wakefield believed the shortage of investment opportunities was a major problem within the British Isles. He argued that by following the principles of his theory of systematic colonization, the capital which was under-utilised in Britain could be used to provide new investment and employment opportunities in the new colonies.¹⁹ At the same time, colonial needs would be met by the provision of labour and the productive utilization of land. Wakefield's theory was therefore aimed at balancing both domestic and colonial needs.

Wakefield made particular use of the failure of the first non-convict colony – the Swan River in Western Australia – to justify his own land sales and emigration fund ideas. It was here that large land grants had been made, but few labourers were attracted to work for the 'capitalists'. The Swan River was the first experiment in free colonization which had been made in Australia in the nineteenth century. Wakefield used it as an example of 'how not to colonize'. His evidence before the Committee on Waste Lands in 1836 detailed the disastrous events which led to the failure of the colony.²⁰ Wakefield noted that colonization was 'amongst the arts which have been lost' and that the founders of

¹⁸ D.N. Winch, 'Classical Economics and the Case for Colonisation' in A.G.L. Shaw (ed.), *Great Britain and the Colonies 1815-1865* (London, 1970), pp. 77-109.

¹⁹ This was in contrast to Ricardian views that capital accumulation was self-regulating and therefore there would be no excess accumulation of capital. Ricardo argued that exporting capital was detrimental to the economy of the exporting country. For a discussion of Ricardian orthodoxy on capital accumulation see D. Winch, *Classical Political Economy*, Chapter 6.

²⁰ Mills, *Colonization*, p. 64.

the Colonization Society of 1830 'grew out of the first proceedings of the British Government in settling the Swan River'.²¹ Wakefield and his followers denounced the generous free land grants which were available at the ratio of 40 acres for every £3 of a settler's capital, which resulted in settlers gaining more land than they could viably develop.²²

The key to Wakefield's theory lay in the method for disposal of land in the colonies. In place of the existing policy of granting large tracts of land, Wakefield proposed that the land should be sold at a fixed price, high enough to prevent land being bought by all immigrants who arrived in the colony. Wakefield did not want labourers acquiring land too early. The money raised from the sale of land should be used to finance immigration to the colony. Immigrants would work for existing landowners for several years until they were in a position to buy farms for themselves. This would ensure more funds becoming available for more assisted immigrants. In this way, a permanent balance between land and labour would be achieved. Furthermore, the colonies would no longer be dependent on convicts for labour. The question of transportation, therefore, was inextricably linked with systematic colonization. Wakefield was confident that if his proposals were implemented, they would civilise colonial society and so attract men of means and education.

These ideas were not entirely new. In 1827, Robert Torrens had argued that systematic colonization would provide a 'safety-valve' to the 'political

²¹ E.G. Wakefield (ed.), *A View of the Art of Colonization, with present reference to the British Empire; in letters between a statesman and a colonist* (London, 1849), pp. 42-3.

²² Peter Burroughs, *Britain and Australia 1831- 1855, a Study in Imperial relations and Crown Lands Administration* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 76-7. While Wakefield and his followers drew attention to the system of land grants, little attention was paid to the quality of the land in the Swan River colony. Much of the land granted was scrub land or dense forests which were totally unsuited to agriculture.

machine'.²³ This idea was later taken up and developed by Wakefield when he identified colonization as a preventative against the spread of Chartism and Socialism. He argued that it was 'well worth while to try colonization, or anything that affords a chance of reducing that competition amongst working classes which is the cause of their political discontent'. He suggested that the 'mere attempt' at colonization would go a long way to placating the working classes and encouraging them to 'bear their lot with patience'.²⁴ Torrens had also proposed that emigration should be funded from land sales.²⁵ Five years earlier Robert Gourlay had put forward his thoughts on systematic colonization and Wakefield drew heavily on these.²⁶ It is generally accepted, therefore, that Wakefield's theory was not innovative and that he was essentially a propagandist and popularizer who collated diverse ideas into a comprehensive theory.²⁷ It has been suggested that his originality lay in the way he presented his theory by impressing 'his own individuality on his borrowed thoughts, and rendered them again in a new and attractive manner'.²⁸

This 'new manner' attracted considerable attention and gained him

²³ 'Editor's Introduction', in Shaw, *Great Britain and the Colonies*, p. 8.

²⁴ Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *A View of the Art of Colonization*, p. 71.

²⁵ 'Editor's introduction', in Shaw, *Great Britain and the Colonies*, p. 8; Torrens' evidence before the Select Committee on Colonial Waste Lands, *B.P.P.* 1836 (512) XI, Q.1178; Peter Burroughs, *Britain and Australia*, p. 15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*; R.C. Mills, *The Colonization of Australia*. Mills provides a comprehensive survey of Gourlay's ideas. Both authors point out that Gourlay's ideas were included in *General Introduction to Statistical Accounts of Upper Canada* (1822) ii vols., and that Wakefield had read this book as he made reference to it in 'Letters to Lord Howick by P__' in the *Spectator*, no. iii, 8 Jan. 1831 and quoted from it in his pamphlet, *A Statement of the principles and objects of a proposed National Society for the cure and prevention of pauperism*, (1830) p. 25.

²⁷ See for example Mills, *Colonization*, pp. 132-9, Burroughs, *Australia*, pp. 13-16; P.Knaplund, *James Stephen and the British Colonial System 1813-1847* (Madison, 1953) p. 68; R.B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia* (Canberra, 1968), pp. 82-3.

²⁸ Mills, *Colonization*, p. 139.

supporters in both government and philosophical circles. In 1830, Wakefield and a number of his followers including Gouger, established the National Colonization Society with the aim of promoting systematic colonization rather than 'mere emigration'.²⁹ Their early approaches to Wellington's government had been unsuccessful. Both Sir George Murray³⁰ and R.W.Hay³¹ rejected approaches from Wakefield and the Colonization Society.³² The former stated that the government wished to discourage emigration, as 'there was more already than they knew how to deal with'.³³ The Colonization Society appears to have had more success with the new Whig ministry of 1830, particularly with Howick who persuaded Goderich, Secretary of State,³⁴ that changes needed to be introduced. New land regulations were outlined in January 1831, which included the inception of assisted emigration.³⁵ Howick introduced a bill on emigration before the House of Commons in February 1831. It included the notable proposal to appoint commissioners to supervise the management of assisted emigration. Despite the parliamentary dissolution of April 1831, before the bill had been carried through all the readings, the government went ahead and appointed an Emigration Commission on 24 June 1831. The warrant named the Duke of Richmond, Howick, Francis T. Baring, Henry Ellis and R.W. Hay as Commissioners

for the purpose of collecting and diffusing information on the subject of Emigration to the British Possessions abroad, and also for the purpose of

²⁹ Mills, *Colonization*, p. 41.

³⁰ Secretary of State May 1828-Nov. 1830.

³¹ Permanent Under-Secretary July 1825-Feb. 1836.

³² In July 1829, an unsuccessful approach was made to the government by Robert Gouger, on behalf of Wakefield, who was still in prison at this time. Gouger forwarded to the Colonial Office a copy of Wakefield's pamphlet, *Sketch of a proposal for colonizing Australia*. Pamphlet enclosed in CO 201/206; see also Mills, *Colonization*, p.155.

³³ E.G. Wakefield (ed.), *A View of the Art of Colonization*, p. 41.

³⁴ Goderich was Secretary of State Apr. – Sept. 1827 and Nov. 1830 – Apr. 1833.

³⁵ Goderich to Darling, 23 Jan. 1831, CO 202/25.

rendering any such assistance as it may be in your power to afford to Persons desirous so to emigrate.³⁶

Elliot was appointed as secretary to the commissioners, and it was by him that the bulk of the tasks were handled. Thus began Elliot's long association with emigration administration.

The reasons for Elliot's appointment are not officially recorded. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that for him it was a progressive career move. His administrative ability had already been rewarded by promotion to précis writer in 1827, a mere two years after entering the Colonial Office. Such early advancement was uncommon – and it was advancement, because a memorandum from Hay shows that the duties of the précis writer were much more important and confidential nature than the name implied.³⁷ Young argued that Elliot was the most outstanding clerk appointed between 1825 and 1830, and that the creation of the post of précis writer offered an exceptionally able junior the chance to be given duties and training commensurate with his abilities.³⁸ It was probably with these abilities in mind that Goderich appointed him as secretary; the position would not have been suitable for, nor considered desirable by a senior clerk, but it befitted an ambitious and able junior.

There was a further significant dimension to the appointment. It appears that Elliot had at least one external rival for the position. Robert Gouger believed that the post was eminently suitable for him and put himself forward as a potential

³⁶ Goderich to Commissioners, 1 July 1831, CO 384/28.

³⁷ Hay to Spring Rice, n.d. 1831, CO 324/146.

³⁸ D.M. Young, *The Colonial Office in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, 1961), pp. 95-6.

candidate. On hearing that emigration commissioners and a secretary were to be appointed, he applied to Francis Place³⁹ for a letter of recommendation, which Gouger forwarded to John Cam Hobhouse⁴⁰ requesting him to use his influence with Goderich and Howick. Gouger referred to the frequent communication he had had with Howick on colonization and the success he had had with his 'colonial studies'.⁴¹ Historians have overlooked Gouger's interest in the secretaryship. Yet it is significant. Had an ally of Wakefield's occupied this post, he would have undoubtedly tried to promote Wakefieldian principles.⁴² But more importantly - the fact that Gouger was unsuccessful in achieving his goal may go some way to explaining why in the future Wakefield and some colonial reformers were so critical of Elliot and his handling of emigration.⁴³

The Emigration Commission 1831-2

While the work of the Emigration Commissioners and Elliot was a relatively minor and transitory aspect of the broader picture of nineteenth-century emigration, it provides a revealing insight into the early experimental schemes for emigration. During this time the foundations for state-aided emigration were laid and the bureaucratic framework and procedures began to emerge, albeit falteringly. Moreover, for Elliot it was a formative period that would have significant consequences for his future management of emigration and associated issues. If the work and significance of a civil servant is to be fully appreciated, all

³⁹ Place was a friend of Wakefield.

⁴⁰ Hobhouse was a Whig and M.P. for Westminster at this time. In 1831 he succeeded as Baron Broughton de Gyfford.

⁴¹ Place to Hobhouse, 23 Feb. 1831, BL Add 36466 ff.288-9 enclosed in Gouger to Hobhouse, n.d., BL Add 36466.

⁴² Wakefield and Gouger later had disagreements and there remained animosity between them.

⁴³ These issues will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

the circumstances which contributed to his practices, influences and reasoning must be examined. His association with the inception of emigration to the Australian colonies, therefore, provides an opportunity to identify areas that particularly affected Elliot's subsequent administration of emigration.

As Secretary, Elliot was responsible for all aspects of administration relating to emigration to the colonies. By means of an apparently minor promotion, he was initiated into the business of emigration that dominated his work for more than three decades. He gained valuable experience in the organization, promotion and management of the procedures required to select and despatch assisted emigrants to the Australian colonies. He handled the correspondence, arranged regular meetings of the Commissioners and kept them informed of the progress of emigration business.⁴⁴ The Commissioners were to receive no money from the Treasury to help finance emigration. However, if parishes were willing, they could provide funds to finance pauper emigration.⁴⁵ In order to persuade parishes and local landlords to assist their objectives, the Commissioners made it a priority to publish pamphlets which set out detailed information about both the North American and Australian colonies.⁴⁶ Elliot drew up the pamphlets, organized their publication and their distribution.⁴⁷ The publicization and promotion of the Australian colonies as a destination for emigrants from the labouring classes had raised an interest in emigration, and in

⁴⁴ See Emigration Commissioners' correspondence in CO 384 and CO 385; also correspondence between Elliot and Richmond, for example, Goodwood MS 648 f2, f67, f88, f112, f124; MS 647 f.73. Some of the correspondence is unsigned but can be identified by Elliot's distinctive handwriting.

⁴⁵ Goderich to Commissioners, 1 July 1831, CO 384/27.

⁴⁶ *Emigrants' Guide to New South Wales* (London, 1832); *Information respecting the Australian colonies* (London, 1831); *Information respecting the British Colonies in North America* (1832)

⁴⁷ See for example Elliot to Richmond 1 Mar. 1832, Goodwood MS 648 f2. Elliot informed Richmond that he had arranged the publication and distribution of notices for Canada. He quoted the cost and stated that they have been sent to the local committees of the Useful Knowledge Society.

expectation of an increase in passengers, shipowners were prepared to take a risk and reduce fares, lowering the cost of passage from between £30-£40 to £18-£20. Ships were fitted out especially for working-class passengers and left Liverpool, Dublin and London once a month. For the time being, private enterprise provided the opportunity for working class emigration.

As the public interest in emigration increased the Colonial Office expanded their commitments. Goderich decided to introduce a scheme to assist women to emigrate to Australia in an attempt to tackle the shortage of women in the colonies. The disproportion of sexes in the Australian colonies had been a matter of concern to the colonial and imperial authorities from as early as 1787, when *Captain Phillip, commander of the First Fleet, had been advised to collect females from the Pacific Islands for his convicts.* It was suggested that whenever they touched any of the islands, the fleet's commanders should be instructed to take aboard any of the women who might be disposed to accompany them.⁴⁸ Although the first assisted emigration scheme for single females was not introduced until more than forty years after the arrival of the First Fleet, the two were inextricably linked. Of the convicts who landed with Phillip, 548 were male and 188 were female.⁴⁹ This numerical imbalance between the sexes became characteristic of Australian settlement. While transportation continued to operate alongside free settlement, the disparity persisted as male convicts continued to outnumber their female counterparts, as can be seen in the population statistics for 1833 in the following table.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ S, Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, pp. 41-2.

⁴⁹ J. Bassett, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Australian History*, 2nd ed., (Melbourne, 1994), p. 113.

⁵⁰ A table is provided in Appendix 3, which shows the number of male and female convicts transported from the United Kingdom to Australia in 1831, and for subsequent years until 1847, the year Elliot left the CLEC.

Table 1.

Population in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 1833

New South Wales	Free males	Free females	Convict males	Convict females
	22,798	13,452	21,846	2,698
Van Diemen's Land	Free males	Free females	Convict males	Convict females
	12,524	8,561	13,664	1,874

Source: Report of the Select Committee on Transportation, 1837, *B.P.P.* (669) XXII.

Wakefield recognized the important role women had to play in his theory of systematic colonization and also the drawbacks of a disproportion between the sexes. He warned that if only a few women emigrated in proportion to the men, colonization would be slow and most unsatisfactory. He argued that an equal emigration of the sexes was 'one essential condition of the best colonization'.⁵¹

The operation of convict transportation not only created the numerical imbalance in the colonies; it also generated the dominant perception of women in the colonies - that of their immorality. Both in the colonies and in Britain it was widely held that the shortage of females caused profligacy and 'social evils' within the colonies. In her study of the colonization of women in Australia, Anne Summers argued that prior to 1840 women were expected to be, and were treated as, 'whores' and that this label was applied indiscriminately to virtually all women in the colony.⁵² The combination of numerical disproportion and immorality were judged by the authorities to be a dangerous constituent in Australian society.

⁵¹ Wakefield, *Art of Colonization*, p. 155.

⁵² Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*, p. 21.

These problems together with the existence of large numbers of single, unemployed females in the agricultural counties in Britain were instrumental in Goderich proposing his scheme for assisted female emigration. This project was to be financed from the proceeds of land sales in the colonies. Following the apparent success of a venture in which fifty females from the Cork Foundling Hospital had been given free passages to New South Wales, Goderich felt confident enough to press ahead with his proposals.⁵³ Following inquiries undertaken by the Emigration Commissioners, Goderich believed that unemployed females in Britain would be willing to emigrate to Australia and that 'trained female servants' would be acceptable settlers to the colonists.⁵⁴ In conjunction with the proposed female emigration, he also suggested the scheme should include provisions for the emigration of male artisans, agricultural labourers and their families, thus attempting to satisfy the colonies' need for labour. He was convinced that the scheme would be acceptable to the colonists, so much so that he approached the Treasury for approval before receiving any response from the colonies. The Commissioners, however, were anxious to act immediately in order to attract emigrants who might otherwise have chosen North America as their destination, once the American emigration season resumed.⁵⁵ By February 1832, Governor Bourke, who looked favourably upon Goderich's

⁵³ Goderich to Darling and enclosures, No. 9, 5 Jan. 1831, HRA, ser.i, xvi, pp. 7 ff.; Goderich to Darling, No.22, 28 Feb. 1831, HRA, ser.i, xvi, p. 9 quoted in Madgwick, *Immigration*, pp. 88-9. This first evidence of a scheme for female assisted emigration also had the distinction of being the only emigration financed by the imperial government. The emigrants' outfits were provided by the hospital governors and the government bore the remainder of the expenses including the cost of providing a matron to supervise the girls during their passage. Their arrival in New South Wales was warmly welcomed by the colonists and the colonial authorities. There was no evidence of the criticism of the character of the girls nor of their behaviour during the voyage which was to become a feature of later female emigration programmes. See also Howick to MacQueen, 19 Jan. 1832, Grey papers, GRE/V/C1.

⁵⁴ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 92.

⁵⁵ Howick to Stewart, 7 Oct. 1831, cited in Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 92.

proposals, had assured the Colonial Office of an annual payment towards the cost of assisted emigration for the next three years of at least £10,000 out of the land sales revenue.

As secretary to the Emigration Commissioners, Elliot was closely involved with these early experimental schemes for female emigration. From 1832, following Goderich's dismissal of the Commissioners until 1833, superintendence of the scheme rested solely with him. These were crucial, formative years in his career, and Elliot's association with single female emigration was to be profoundly influential on his attitudes and approaches to emigration in later years. Elliot's experiences and observations during this period were to shape and direct the nature and organization of assisted emigration from Britain to Australia during the following three decades and even beyond.

Regulations for female emigration were issued by the Commissioners in October 1831. In their report to Goderich in March 1832, they reported that they had 'endeavoured to direct hither such a number of female settlers as may tend to correct the existing disproportion between the sexes in Australia'. As they had experienced difficulty in selecting proper 'objects' to be sent out separately and independently, they had been compelled to limit the bounty to females emigrating in the company of their parents or immediate families.⁵⁶

Between 1832 and 1836, 64 per cent of the New South Wales emigration fund was used for assisting single women to emigrate.⁵⁷ Married mechanics received a loan of £20 which the government expected to be repaid in the colonies, while single women received a free grant of £8.⁵⁸ This was increased to

⁵⁶ Commissioners to Goderich, 15 Mar 1832, *B.P.P.* 1832 (724) XXII, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Bourke to Goderich, 14 Apr. 1832, *B.P.P.* 1833 (141) XXVI, p. 36.

⁵⁸ CO 385/11 includes despatches and correspondence relating to individual females who applied for the £8 grant.

£12 in 1833, and in 1835 the full fare of £16 was granted. To qualify for the 'bounty',⁵⁹ assisted females had to be between the ages of fifteen and thirty, i.e. of suitable child-bearing age. Females under the age of eighteen, however, would only be granted a bounty if they emigrated with their parents. Women travelling under the protection of their families; those who were qualified as agricultural servants, and those who would pay a larger proportion of the passage money, were given preference over other female applicants.⁶⁰ It was made very clear from the start of the scheme that assistance would not be granted indiscriminately to all women who qualified under the regulations.⁶¹ Writing to a Liverpool ship broker in November 1831, Elliot stressed that financial aid was only to be allowed to women who would not have been able to emigrate without it. Funds were not intended to help females who were already intending to emigrate. The purpose of the scheme was to increase the number of females emigrating; not to finance those who were already inclined to travel to the colonies.⁶² This attitude shows Elliot's typical concern for economy.

Prioritizing and enforcing the selection criteria for the emigrants, together with the associated business was a time-consuming exercise. As the management and administration of the scheme fell upon Elliot's shoulders and it was apparent from the start that Elliot would be unable to undertake all the functions himself. His duties as secretary were many and it is evident that the details of administration took up much of his time. Correspondence reveals that between routine matters such as arranging regular meetings of the commissioners, despatching promotional notices to various parishes, and mundane but important

⁵⁹ The term used for the financial grant.

⁶⁰ Emigration Commissioners to Goderich, 10 Oct. 1831, CO 385/12.

⁶¹ Madgwick, *Immigration*, pp. 93-4.

⁶² Elliot to Walkinshaw, 15 Nov. 1831, CO 385/12.

tasks such as establishing who was responsible for the franking of the post, there was little time remaining to supervise personally the selection of emigrants and arrange their passages.⁶³ Goderich had been enthusiastic and confident about his new scheme, but he had also been vague and naïve regarding the necessary administrative procedures.⁶⁴ In view of the large number of women it was anticipated would be sent out to Australia, it was believed the Emigration Commissioners and Elliot would not be able to carry out the project without some additional aid. As Parliament was unlikely to authorise further expenditure on the scheme, alternative arrangements would need to be made.⁶⁵ The methods by which the bounty was granted initially emerged as ‘the alternative arrangements’.

The first regulations put in place, granted a bounty to those single females between the ages of 15 and 30 who were emigrating with family. This method resulted in women arranging their own passage and then merely claiming the grant on arrival in the colony.⁶⁶ This kept administration for Elliot to a minimum, as the intending emigrants dealt primarily with the ship owners or their agents. An added advantage was that family members would be present to supervise the single women during the voyage, and on arrival in the colony. This was an important aspect of the system as it released imperial and colonial authorities from having to shoulder significant supervisory responsibilities. This situation was particularly appealing to Elliot as he questioned the wisdom of sending out large numbers of single women without responsible, personal supervision. Elliot firmly

⁶³ See for example, Elliot to Duke of Richmond 23 July 1831, Goodwood MS. 635 f39; Elliot to Richmond, 17 Jan. 1832, Goodwood MS. 647 f25; Elliot to Richmond, 14 Jul. 1832, Goodwood MS 650 f24.

⁶⁴ Hammerton, ‘Without natural protectors’, pp. 539-66.

⁶⁵ Report of Emigration Commissioners, *B.P.P.* 1831/33 (724) XXXII, pp. 6-7, 29-30.

⁶⁶ Report of the Agent General for Emigration, Accounts and Papers, *B.P.P.* 1837-8 (388) XL p.4.

believed that family and friends provided the most suitable form of moral protection for the women. It soon became apparent, however, that this existing bounty scheme was not producing the number of female emigrants that the colonies needed. The Commissioners therefore proposed to engage a ship exclusively for single women who would sail without the protection of their family. Under these circumstances, it was felt that it would be wise to raise the minimum age from 15 to 18, and prospective applicants were required to provide a recommendation from a clergyman and two householders from their parish. The Commissioners also made it clear that those women whose experience made them suitable as farm servants would receive priority.⁶⁷

Elliot had great reservations about the venture. He conceded that there was a great and immediate need to increase the female population in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land – but in his view by providing the quantity of female emigrants, their quality was being compromised.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, despite his reservations, Elliot undertook the promotion and administration of the scheme in his usual conscientious and thorough manner. The colonial authorities' idea of a suitable female emigrant was one who was between the ages of eighteen and thirty; was fit and healthy; had experience of domestic service within an agricultural environment and, more importantly, was of good moral character -- essential for marriage and motherhood. The Emigration Commissioners and Elliot, therefore, had a demanding charge to realise. The selection procedure would have to be rigorous in order to meet the colonial authorities' standards and

⁶⁷ Commissioners to Goderich, 11 Oct 1831, enclosed in Goderich to Bourke, *B.P.P.* 1831 (328) XIX, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁸ Elliot to Dalton, 15 Dec. 1831, CO 385/12; Elliot to MacDonagh, 4 Jan. 1832, CO 385/13

promotional literature and information of the scheme would have to take account of the type of emigrant they required. Elliot was responsible for the production and circulation of all the relevant information directed at agencies and intending emigrants.

Madgwick suggested that the regulations issued by the Commissions in 1831 were 'enthusiastically received in England by individuals...and by parishes and public institutions which had to provide sustenance for increasing numbers of paupers'.⁶⁹ Certainly Elliot received a substantial number of enquiries from institutions in England and in Ireland.⁷⁰ But there was a problem. Correspondence was received from a range of establishments such as the Refuge for the Destitute, workhouses and charitable organisations, and even the London Female Penitentiary - an unlikely source for recruitment of females who would be regarded as suitable and who would meet the colonies' criteria. This charged the commissioners and Elliot with a difficult task of balancing the needs of the colony with those of the mother country. However, the advantages of liaison with workhouses and charitable organisations were not lost on Elliot and the Commissioners. They were an ever-replenishing reservoir of large numbers of women. An additional benefit was that institutions could advise as to the moral characters and 'pedigree' of the women. An added bonus from the parishes' point of view was that emigration from the workhouses could help reduce the poor rates. These early years of assisted emigration were therefore characterised by a partnership of public and private agencies. Elliot made contact with numerous

⁶⁹ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 95.

⁷⁰ For examples of requests from Irish agencies see Bessard to Elliot 15 Feb. 1832; Secretary of Incorporated Society for Promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland to Elliot, 5 Mar. 1832, CO 384/30.

organisations, parish officers, ship brokers and gentry. He gradually extended his network of contacts, who were to be essential during the years ahead in his dealings with the business of emigration. It was in cooperation with some of these contacts that the new experiments in female emigration were undertaken.

The first two ships solely for female emigrants left for Australia in 1832. Females from charitable institutions in Cork and Dublin sailed in the *Red Rover* to New South Wales, and women selected by a charitable committee in London were dispatched to Van Diemen's Land in the *Princess Royal*. The latter's passengers were to have included 193 single women, 106 of whom had been put forward by institutions such as the Magdalen Female Penitentiary and the Guardian Asylum.⁷¹ Due to a change in these arrangements, however, 84 were taken from two charitable organisations, 22 from workhouses and the remainder from casual applicants.⁷² William Fry, who had connections with several London charities, supervised the selection of passengers on the *Princess Royal*.

By April 1832, however, the practice of engaging ships by the Commissioners solely for female emigrants had been discontinued. Emigrants were to be given financial assistance to secure a passage on private ships. And as funds were getting low, Elliot informed the Duke of Richmond it had become necessary to revert to the practice of not assisting female emigrants other than by a contribution of £8 towards their passage fare.⁷³ This communication between Elliot and Richmond reveals that even before the commissioners had been dismissed in August 1832, Elliot made significant policy decisions, keeping the

⁷¹ William Fry to Committee of Ladies of Hobart Town, 13 April 1832, CO 384/30.

⁷² Report of Agent-General for Emigration, 29 Apr. 1838, Accounts and Papers, *B.P.P.* 1837-8, (388) XL, p.1.

⁷³ Elliot to Richmond, 28 April 1832, Goodwood MS 648 f.124.

commissioners appropriately informed. While the policy change appears to have been undertaken by Elliot on financial grounds, it may also have been influenced by his critical attitude towards single females travelling *en masse* to the colonies.

Following the dismissal of the commissioners in August 1832, Elliot returned to his office within the Colonial Office, where he continued to be concerned with policy rather than practical operations.⁷⁴ Having recognised the advantage of using charitable organisations, he continued to use these for the selection of female emigrants. He had had personal dealings with Edward Forster, chairman of the Refuge for the Destitute, while he was secretary to the Commissioners. In February 1832, Elliot requested Forster, chairman of the Refuge for the Destitute, to call at the commissioners' office to discuss the question of female emigration.⁷⁵ Following this meeting Forster was guaranteed the government bounty on all single women and widows whom the Refuge felt suitable.⁷⁶ Elliot, with the approval of the Colonial Office, transferred the scheme to Forster and his committee. By 1833, the Refuge for the Destitute had established an emigration sub-committee, which assumed the title of the London Emigration Committee, and until 1836 it was the recognized organization by which emigrants were aided to the Australian colonies.

It is clear that Elliot was determined that the London Emigration Committee's operations should be successful, and offered them as much help and advice as they required. He had promotional notices printed for Forster, and circulated them to 'every parish in London and in the ten miles round'. Elliot also arranged for advertisements to be placed in the principal London newspapers.

⁷⁴ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 99.

⁷⁵ Elliot to Forster, 16 Feb. 1832, CO 385/13

⁷⁶ Elliot to Forster, 28 May 1832, CO 385/14

He noted that this was the first real promotion of the new scheme and hoped that it would bring in numerous applications.⁷⁷

As a voluntary organization, the Emigration Committee had to direct its operations in such a way as to ensure its costs were covered. By charging each emigrant £1 more than the required fare, the committee was able to cover its administration costs. Although acting on behalf of the Colonial Office, the committee did not have the authority to negotiate directly with the colonies. Elliot remained in control of the superintendence of the scheme. This lack of both full official status and the security of a guaranteed income, together with the problem of ensuring the emigration was self supporting, resulted in the committee allowing ship owners and brokers to take responsibility for selecting emigrants.⁷⁸

This latitude undoubtedly fostered a measure of unscrupulous dealings and exploitation of the system. John Marshall, who was the Committee's chief agent, was responsible for recruiting emigrants and then reporting back to gain the Committee's approval. At times he came under severe criticism for his handling of selection, as did the Committee. Where practicable, the committee would interview the proposed emigrants to ascertain their age, character and previous occupation. It was not always possible to do this, but both Forster and Marshall emphasized that they took every possible precaution to verify character references forwarded to them by applicants. Forster did acknowledge that on occasion 'Mr Marshall's judgement and mine did not exactly agree upon the propriety [of the female], and therefore I thought it best to be on the safe side'. Marshall declared that there was 'no single instance' during the whole period of the operation of the

⁷⁷ Elliot to Forster, 13 July 1832, CO 385/14; see also memorandum from Elliot to Richmond, 4 Apr. 1832, Goodwood MS 648 f.89.

⁷⁸ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 101.

Emigration Committee that prospective emigrants did not undergo 'the system of searching investigation as to her previous character'.⁷⁹ Despite these assertions, criticism of the women's morality was evident from the early days of the committee's new operations.

In 1833, the *Bussorah Merchant* and the *Layton* were despatched by the London Emigration Committee to New South Wales. Of the 451 single women on board, the majority were destitute and from workhouses. Applications from workhouses had flowed into the Committee, who received many more applicants than required.⁸⁰ Forster, [chairman and treasurer of the committee], felt this to be beneficial, as it gave them the advantage of being more selective in their choice and therefore more likely to satisfy the needs of the colonies.⁸¹ Despite a number of previously convicted prostitutes being among the emigrants chosen by the Committee, the remaining passengers of the *Bussorah Merchant* were considered to be 'satisfactory' by the colony.⁸² Authorities in New South Wales however, found the females sent out on the *Layton* were far from respectable. Bourke was extremely critical and reported that as a result of the characters of the females, it had been impossible to form a Ladies Committee from existing settlers to help the emigrants find employment and positions with families. Marshall answered criticisms concerning the selection of these emigrants stressing that he and the Committee had endeavoured to ascertain the character of all the females on the *Layton*, and hoped that they would be a very valuable acquisition to the colony.

⁷⁹ Report of the Select Committee on Transportation, 1838, evidence of Forster and Marshall, B.P.P. 1837-38 (669) XXII, QQ.1043-50; Forster QQ.1166-8.

⁸⁰ Report by Edward Foster on emigrants per *Layton*, CO 384/32.

⁸¹ Forster to Elliot, 30 Mar. 1833, CO 384/32. Forster was a partner of bankers Lubbock & Co. and closely connected with the London Dock Company; for further details concerning Forster's business connections see F.J.A. Broeze, 'Private Enterprise and the peopling of Australia', *The Economic History Review*, second series, XXXV, Feb. 1982.

⁸² Bourke to Stanley, 6 December 1833, CO 201/233.

He claimed to have travelled over 7,000 miles interviewing women and checking their credentials.⁸³ Despite his protestations, the colonists accused Marshall of filling any gaps in the passenger lists at the last minute by recruiting women of 'doubtful reputation'.⁸⁴ As witness before the Select Committee on Transportation in 1837, Marshall was questioned about reports from the colonies that many of the female immigrants were prostitutes. He replied firmly that he 'never knew a person that came before the [London Emigration] Committee that bore the appearance of a street prostitute'.⁸⁵

Madgwick argued that circumstantial evidence pointed to carelessness or fraud by either the Committee or Marshall. He suggested a reasonable explanation was that the Committee accepted Marshall's recommendation and failed to make further investigation, which they claimed to have made in every case.⁸⁶ Considering that the Committee was a voluntary agency and that funding of the scheme was a major concern, it is reasonable to assume that Forster and his fellow members did allow Marshall considerable freedom and the opportunity to assume a leading role. The Committee and Marshall also came under sustained attack from colonial reformers. Sir William Molesworth complained that Marshall had become 'the Committee itself' and that as a result the streets of Sydney and Hobart were 'crowded...with female prostitutes'.⁸⁷ It was acknowledged by colonial and home authorities that many emigrants were intent on deceiving the Committee and their agents. By falsifying character references and claiming others' identities, many succeeded in receiving a bounty to Australia

⁸³ Marshall to Hay, 19 Sept. 1833, CO 384/32.

⁸⁴ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 103.

⁸⁵ Report of the Select Committee on Transportation, 1838, evidence of Marshall, *B.P.P.* 1837-38 (669) XXII, p. 88.

⁸⁶ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 103.

⁸⁷ Molesworth, 5 May 1840, *HC Debates* (3rd s) LIII c. 1236

under false pretences. But with the limited human and financial resources available, it was a formidable task to prevent such guile and fraudulence.

Elliot, on his own, was not in a position to scrutinise the emigrants personally, and so he had to rely on the degree of vigilance and discernment exercised by Forster's committee and Marshall. Elliot gave 'great Credit' to Marshall for the shipping arrangements he undertook. On the other hand, he was convinced that the selection of emigrants 'had not been successful'. He recognized the desirability of increasing the proportion of women in the colonies, but he stressed that it was no easy task, nor a practical one, to recruit suitable emigrants. The main reasons Elliot put forward were that people simply did not want to go to Australia due to 'Prejudice against the Name of Convict Colonies and Sickness, also having occurred in the Vessels [at this time]...was rather discouraging'.⁸⁸

If reports from the colonies are to be believed, there appears to have been a significant number of unsuitable and undesirable women who arrived in the colonies. Undoubtedly the scheme for female emigrants which operated from 1831 until 1836 was open to abuse by all participants. Forster repeatedly defended himself and his committee. He was adamant that the most vigilant inquiry into the character and circumstances of each individual took place, and the most scrupulous care taken over the selection of each emigrant. Elliot does not appear to have laid the blame for the outcry against the character of the emigrants at Forster or his committee's door. Elliot had always had his own reservations about schemes for female emigration, and the censure directed at the committee's

⁸⁸ Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, Elliot's evidence, *B.P.P.*1947 (737) VI, Q. 28.

operations merely strengthened his resolve that family emigration was the superior option.

The provision of bounties was not confined to females emigrating under the direction of the Emigration Committee. During the initial five years of assisted emigration many single females sailed with their parents, or on vessels which were not primarily chartered for emigrants.⁸⁹ The bounty available from the government had encouraged private shipping brokers to become involved in the emigration of women. They also recognised the advantage of recruiting from the workhouses and it soon became apparent that many abuses were being practised by these independent recruiters. Some parish authorities were usually more than willing to put forward inmates and other females they considered as potential emigrants. Promotional literature was circulated widely by ship owners and brokers, and clearly directed at parish officers and charitable organisations. As early as 1831, Elliot had received notification from Robert Gouger and Co. which included 'An address to Magistrates, Landowners and Ratepayers' in which the company stated that in order to facilitate female emigration to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, they were willing to negotiate with 'parishes, individuals, societies, and the Board of Emigration'.⁹⁰ This was a matter of some concern for Low, emigration agent at Liverpool, who was well aware of the frauds which were often perpetrated by unscrupulous shipping agents and owners against unsuspecting emigrants and their sponsors.⁹¹ He noted with some concern that parishes were ridding themselves of paupers without 'just

⁸⁹ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 97.

⁹⁰ Robert Gouger & Co. to Elliot, 5 July 1832, CO 384/30.

⁹¹ Aspects of fraud are discussed in the chapter on the health, safety and protection of passengers.

regard to their comfort and accommodation'.⁹² It seemed that criticism and concern about the scheme was emanating from all directions.

Goderich had been confident that the women sent out by the Commissioners' efforts would be 'received with gratitude by the colonists themselves, and by all who are acquainted with New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land'.⁹³ Unfortunately, almost from the beginning, the scheme proved to be highly controversial and met with hostility on all fronts. Most of the criticism was concerned with the character of the women who were selected, the motives for their selection and the provisions which were made during the long passage for their moral well being and security. From its inception, Elliot had always had concerns about these aspects of the scheme.

The first two ships which had sailed under the newly introduced experiment met with a mixed reception. The emigrants from the *Red Rover* were received favourably, and the females were successful in finding suitable employment. On the other hand, Van Diemen's Land was greatly dissatisfied with those who landed on their shore in the *Princess Royal*. Governor Arthur claimed that at least one half of them were prostitutes. He conceded that the government in recruiting females from the penitentiary had acted with the very best motives, but complained that the authorities had sadly erred in their estimation of the reformation of the women. Arthur informed Goderich that

it would almost seem, whilst it has been their [the colony's] object to remove the best characters from those institutions, that the persons in the immediate charge of them, must have availed themselves of the opportunity of getting rid of some of the very worst.⁹⁴

⁹² Low to Lefevre, 28 Sept. 1833, CO 384/32.

⁹³ Goderich to Commissioners for Emigration, 4 Aug. 1832, *B.P.P.* 1832 (724) XXII, p. 29.

⁹⁴ Arthur to Hay, 10 Sept. 1832, CO 280/35.

Reports of incidents and complaints continued to find their way to Elliot at the Colonial Office. The Ladies Committee of Van Diemen's Land, who helped newly arrived females find work in the colony, complained that one woman who had arrived on the *Princess Royal* had a good written reference to her character but was expelled from the Female Orphanage⁹⁵ for smuggling in a male convict who was disguised as a woman.⁹⁶

Although the main criticisms of the scheme for emigration of female emigrants related to their immorality and their lack of appropriate work experience as domestic or farm servants, there was another area of concern which became equally important for Elliot. This was the management and supervision of the women during the voyage. Governor Arthur had warned Goderich as early as February 1832 that great care should be taken of the arrangements for the women on board ship during the passage out to the colonies. While he felt female emigration would be beneficial to Van Diemen's Land, he informed the Colonial Secretary that his experience of female convict emigration had proved 'that the greatest possible consequences attaches to the treatment which females of the lower class meet with on the voyage, and too great precaution cannot possibly be used to prevent their demoralization'.⁹⁷ His fears proved well founded, and following the arrival of the *Princess Royal* in Van Diemen's Land in September 1832, he reported that supervision of the emigrants during the voyage had been sadly deficient. He criticised the emigrants' licentious behaviour and felt that the details were 'too gross to repeat'. Arthur was in no doubt that they were 'far more depraved than the generality of convict women'.⁹⁸ The *David Scott*, was another

⁹⁵ Newly arrived female emigrants stayed at the Female Orphanage until they found employment.

⁹⁶ Ladies Committee of Van Diemen's Land to Fry, 9 Oct. 1832, CO 280/36.

⁹⁷ Arthur to Goderich, 14 Feb. 1832, CO 280/33.

⁹⁸ Arthur to Hay, 10 Sept. 1832, CO 280/35.

ship to which attention was directed. It was alleged that out of the 247 women emigrants, 41 of them were prostitutes. Furthermore, it was reported that they 'had unrestrained intercourse with the men [crew], and by their abandoned and outrageous conduct they kept the ship in a continual state of alarm'.⁹⁹

Of further concern were the complaints of those emigrants of 'the better class' who accused the home authorities of deceiving them regarding the character of their fellow travellers.¹⁰⁰ As Fry had originally been let down by London Penitentiary, and the *Princess Royal* carried 80 passengers more than was originally expected, he had resorted to recruiting several individual emigrants. The result was that the ship's passengers included women from a diverse range of class backgrounds, ranging from the destitute to the respectable lower-middle class.¹⁰¹ This mixture of classes was to be the basis of bitter complaints from Arthur, colonists, and some of the emigrants. The contemporary opinion which seemed to be dominant was that if the women were of good character when they left British shores, they were often corrupt by the time they disembarked in the colonies due to lack of supervision and protection on board. It was following this criticism that the Colonial Office passed the management of female emigration to the London Emigration Committee who followed regulations sanctioned by the Government.¹⁰² The first ship sent out by the Committee, however, also experienced discipline problems during the voyage; Bourke reported that the ship 'presented a great scene of...immorality during the whole of the voyage'.¹⁰³

There appeared to have been very little improvement with the next ship which sailed under the aegis of the Committee. It was alleged that disorder had

⁹⁹ Report of the Select Committee on Transportation, 1838, *B.P.P.* 1837-38 (669) XXII, p. 92.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur to Hay, 10 Sept. 1832, CO 280/35.

¹⁰¹ Hammerton, 'Without Natural Protectors', p. 545.

¹⁰² Mills, *Colonization of Australia*, p. 187.

¹⁰³ Bourke to Spring Rice, 13 Feb. 1835, CO 201/252.

reigned during the whole voyage and that sexual intercourse had taken place between many of the passengers and crew.¹⁰⁴ Once again, there were complaints from other emigrants regarding the conduct of their fellow passengers and the seamen. Not only did these events cause an outcry in the colonies and the Colonial Office, but *The Times* printed leaders and letters from the more respectable emigrants complaining about the management and supervision arrangements for the voyage, thereby making the issue one of public concern.¹⁰⁵ Following a press campaign against the female emigration scheme, Forster reported that many prospective emigrants had withdrawn their applications, and for many months afterwards, respectable women were deterred from coming forward for selection. The first three ships which departed after *The Times's* adverse publicity were all below their full quota.¹⁰⁶ Wakefield, always ready to attack any emigration scheme emanating from the Colonial Office and to promote his own theory of colonization, advocated a more systematic approach. He strongly criticised both the London Emigration Committee and the government for allowing so important a task as the conduct of emigration by the State, to be superintended by 'a party of people whom nobody knows anything at all about'.¹⁰⁷

Criticism continued at home and in the colonies. By 1836, the decision had been taken that parties of single females would no longer be sent out to the colonies. Ironically, when in July 1836 Forster wrote to Sir George Grey to recommend that no further emigration of single females to Sydney should take place unless under the protection of parents or new relatives, he pointed to the

¹⁰⁴ Bourke to Stanley, 21 Jan. 1834, CO 201/238.

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 28 Aug., 3 Sept., 19 Sept., 26 Dec. 1834.

¹⁰⁶ Hammerton, 'Without Natural Protectors', p. 554.

¹⁰⁷ Evidence of Wakefield in Report from the Select Committee on Disposal of Lands in the British Colonies, *B.P.P.* 1836 XI (512). pp. 99-100.

lack of morality in New South Wales as the main reason. Forster declared that the schemes had ceased due to the 'extreme immorality and the open and profligate desecration of the Sabbath in Sydney'.¹⁰⁸ It is apparent, however, that the unabated criticism from the colonies and parties in Britain was influential in bringing the scheme to an end. Regardless of these problems, the schemes which had operated between 1831 and 1836 had introduced almost 8,000 women into New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land.¹⁰⁹

Despite the ending of the females schemes, the question of female emigration remained high profile. The seemingly inseparability of female emigration and convict transportation ensured that when the spotlight fell on transportation, women's migration was usually drawn into the debate. The Report of the Select Committee on Transportation 1838 reflected this. Evidence presented to the committee supported Van Diemen's Land's Legislative Council's suggestion for renewal of the female emigration schemes. James Henty of Launceston criticised the cessation of the schemes and argued that the women had brought about considerable moral improvement in society. He suggested that without the schemes, Launceston would fall once again into a 'barbarous state'.¹¹⁰

By the time these schemes ceased, Elliot was no longer involved with the system. In 1833, he had been promoted to senior clerk for the North American Department of the Colonial Office. He left the business of emigration for the next four years. Elliot's secondment to the post of secretary to the Emigration Commissioners in 1831 had provided him with the ideal opportunity to advance

¹⁰⁸ Forster to Grey, 22 July 1836, Emigration, *B.P.P.* 1836 (526) XL, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Report of Agent General for Emigration, *B.P.P.* 1837-8 (388) XL, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Report of Select Committee on Transportation, 1838, *B.P.P.* (669) XXLL, p. 112.

his career. By undertaking the administrative duties associated with the work of the Commissioners, he gained valuable experience in the organization, promotion and management of the procedures required to select and despatch assisted emigrants to the Australian colonies. It was during this period that Elliot developed a network of contacts among parish officers, charitable organizations, gentry and ship owners, who would prove essential in his later career. Furthermore, this early venture into the field of assisted emigration, enabled Elliot to take responsibility for minor, but not insignificant policy decisions.

But the most notable aspect of Elliot's association with the early experiments in female emigration is the impact it had on Elliot's views of the whole system of assisted emigration. He strongly believed that single female emigration schemes were not a suitable nor prudent answer to the colonies' problem of disparity between the sexes and the associated consequences. Elliot advocated throughout his career that only family emigration should be promoted and assisted by government. Elliot's opinions persisted and the nineteenth century programmes for assisted emigration would be shaped and developed in the light of his past experiences with the early experiments in female emigration. Despite his interlude with the Gosford Commission, Elliot retained his interest in emigration issues. He remarked that while his duties in Canada had been 'very various...as far as I had Time I did not forget the Subject of Emigration. I had Occasions to make extensive Journies [sic], and I always took every opportunity of inquiry into the Condition and Progress of Emigrants'.¹¹¹

He had obviously given considerable thought to the question of female emigration. When he was appointed Agent-General for emigration in 1837, he

¹¹¹ Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, Elliot's evidence 1847 *B.P.P. (737)* VI, p. 5, Q. 26

was determined that there should be no further attempts to ship out single females without the protection of their family circle. Family emigration schemes were to be the order of the day. Not only would such arrangements require less supervision of female emigrants, but it would be 'to [Colonists'] Advantage, by establishing in the Community the natural Police...of regular Families'.¹¹² Throughout his long association with emigration to Australia, Elliot remained suspicious of emigration schemes for females without family protection. He believed the fact that women were even willing to travel alone cast doubts upon their senses of responsibility.¹¹³

Later, as the balance between the sexes slowly began to be addressed, Elliot was concerned that progress should be maintained. In the 'great emigration of 1841'¹¹⁴ the sex balance among the emigrants was almost perfect. This had been achieved by stringent application of the rules.¹¹⁵ Elliot was clear that there must never be more male adults than females in neither the same ship nor 'at least in the course of Emigration effected within the same definite period'.¹¹⁶ This was an example of the social engineering which Elliot built in to later emigration schemes and practices. Examination of these later aspects of his work will reveal further aspects of government administration of emigration.

¹¹² Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, Elliot's evidence 1847 *B.P.P.* (737) VI, Q. 4401

¹¹³ Elliot to Stephen, 3 Jan. 1839, enclosed in Account and Papers, Report from Agent-General for Emigration, *B.P.P.* (536) XXXIX, pp.75-6.

¹¹⁴ This is discussed in Chapter 4..

¹¹⁵ John McDonald and Eric Richards, 'The Great Emigration of 1841: Recruitment for New South Wales in British emigration fields', *Population Studies* 51 (1997), pp. 337-355.

¹¹⁶ Report of Agent General for Emigration, 1837-8 *B.P.P.* (388) XL, p. 60.

Chapter 2

Administration of assisted emigration

The appointment of an Agent-General for Emigration in 1837 was a landmark in colonial history. Not only did it signal that emigration had become a responsibility of government, but it also resulted in the emigration service generating an area of significant administrative reform. During the next ten years Elliot was influential in moulding the bureaucratic framework which supported the government and the commercial activities – both essential for assisting migrants to the British colonies. His main tasks were to promote the government schemes, with the aim of increasing the number of ‘suitable’ emigrants from the labouring population, and to supervise the work of the Colonial Office’s corps of emigration officers at the ports of embarkation. According to contemporary critics, Elliot was an inefficient administrator who lacked the organizational and management skills to perform his duties effectively.¹ Were these accusations valid? Administration of government-aided emigration was a multi-faceted and challenging process. To assess the nature of the administrative developments overseen by Elliot, various aspects of his work during this period must be examined. How did he approach his responsibilities? What sort of administrator was Elliot? If he were to address his duties effectively, Elliot needed to bring specific qualities to the roles of Agent-General and later chairman of the CLEC. This chapter aims to identify and assess these qualities.

The post of Agent-General was initially regarded as a temporary

¹ See for example *Colonial Gazette*, 29 Jan. 1840, pp. 65-6; 5 Feb. 1840, p. 83.

appointment. It was created in response to the recommendations of the select committee appointed in 1836 to consider the question of colonial lands. Wakefield, as chief witness, strongly influenced the report.² He informed the committee that uncertainty had prevailed in the whole system of colonization, largely due to repeated changes in policy. Some permanent guiding agency was required to bring continuity and method to colonization.³ Swayed by Wakefield's evidence and proposals, the committee recommended that the sale of colonial wasteland should be placed under the charge of a central land board, based in London.⁴ The net proceeds from the sale of Crown land in the colonies would constitute an emigration fund, and each colony would receive immigrants in proportion to its land sales. The call for a land board was not adopted, but Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, firmly believed that some presiding agency should be established to supervise emigration and to provide a measure of uniformity.⁵ He preferred the appointment of a single official. He was convinced that assisted emigration had

become far too important...to be committed to a gratuitous and desultory agency, and that it ought, without delay, to be intrusted [sic] to a responsible officer of the Government, acting under the authority and instructions of the Secretary of State.⁶

Glenelg offered the position to Elliot, who accepted it on his return from Canada.

² 'House of Commons Committee on Disposal of Waste Lands in the Colonies (1836): Evidence of Wakefield [Extract]', *Select Documents on British Colonial Policy 1830-1860*, ed. K. N. Bell and W.P. Morrell (Oxford, 1928), pp. 214-18.

³ Evidence by E.G. Wakefield, *ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴ Madgwick, p.123, concluded that 'the resolutions of the Committee were a précis of Wakefield's evidence'.

⁵ Glenelg to Bourke, Duplicate No. 305, 29 April 1837, M.L. A1275 pp. 435-8.

⁶ Stephen to Spearman, 9 Jan. 1837, CO 384/41.

It was clear, however, that 'the whole arrangement was to be looked upon as experimental'.⁷ Elliot, therefore, sought assurances that his post at the Colonial Office would be held open for him in the event of his new position being short lived.⁸ In retrospect this step proved to have been unnecessary. By 1839 there was an established emigration office under Elliot's supervision. As the emigration office attained a permanent status, Elliot resigned all further claims upon his former position in the Colonial Office.

Despite the anticipated transitory nature of his new appointment, Elliot undertook his duties with enthusiasm and energy. This approach came naturally to Elliot, who displayed an eager and zealous disposition in both his professional and social lives. He was described by Carlyle as 'brisk' and by Henry Taylor as 'spirited' and 'mettlesome',⁹ and these traits were clearly discernible in his execution of responsibilities. As early as June 1837, Elliot was personally organising the emigration of labourers from Gloucestershire. Having received information that there was widespread unemployment and a 'disposition to Emigrate' in the parishes of Bisley and Uley, Elliot wrote to Stephen outlining proposals to engage a ship to convey emigrants from Bristol to New South Wales and proceeded to make arrangements to recruit candidates.¹⁰ The following month he undertook a tour of the main British ports from which the emigrant ships sailed and where the emigration officers were based. This provided him with the

⁷ Elliot to Glenelg, 17 Dec. 1838, CO 384/48.

⁸ Elliot to Sir George Grey, 21 April 1837, CO 384/41. Elliot's salary was £800 with provision for incremental rises to a maximum of £1000. Elliot was successful in his request for annual increments of £50.

⁹ Carlyle to Wilson, 21 Sept. 1837, in C.E. Norton (ed.), *Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, vol. ix (London and New York, 1888), p. 307; H. Taylor, *Autobiography* (London, 1885), p. 164.

¹⁰ Elliot to Stephen 24 June 1837, CO 384/42.

opportunity to meet his officers and scrutinize their work.¹¹ This ‘hands on’ approach was typical of Elliot’s style of administration.

His pragmatism was also born out of necessity. Because of the limited resources and manpower of his office, he had to undertake many of the more mundane administrative tasks himself. These could involve such routine activities as forwarding information to potential emigrants, tracing passengers’ lost luggage¹² and sending supplies of vaccine to ships’ surgeons.¹³ He continued in the same vein as he had during his previous association with assisted emigration. When specific problems arose with ships, emigrants or recruiting agencies, he frequently travelled to the ports to tackle personally the prevailing difficulties – often leaving London or arriving at the port during the early hours of the morning.¹⁴

The effect of Elliot and his limited number of staff having to handle much of the emigration business was twofold. Firstly, Elliot and his staff were overworked and at times struggled to handle the increasing volume of business. The logistics of co-ordinating the recruitment, selection and conveyance of emigrants to the Australian colonies were complex and time-consuming. Between 1837 and 1838 public interest in assisted emigration increased dramatically. As a result, a proliferation of correspondence to and from the emigration office added significantly to Elliot and his staff’s workload. By the end of his first year in office

¹¹ Elliot journal, n.d. July 1837, Elliot papers MS 19425 /1.

¹² Elliot to Marshall, 20 Feb. 1838, re. Lost trunk of passenger Elizabeth Foley on ‘Lady Macnaughton’, CO 386/21. Following the ship’s return to Britain, Elliot personally met the master of the ship about the missing luggage.

¹³ Elliot to Stephen, 7 June 1838, CO 384/47.

¹⁴ See for example: Elliot to Howick, 14 Apr. 1832, Grey papers GRE 84/11; Elliot to Stephen, 30 Oct. 1838, CO 384/48.

he informed the Secretary of State that he and his office were under considerable pressure to prevent themselves from 'being overflowed with applications'.¹⁵

The second effect was more positive in character. By experiencing a broad range of activities and responsibilities in such proximity and detail, Elliot acquired expertise and acumen in emigration. The insights and understanding of the problems and expectations associated with emigration which Elliot gained as Agent-General undoubtedly benefited his subsequent work with the CLEC. His unquestionable appreciation of emigration issues gave him a sensitivity and perception that were highly significant. Elliot himself viewed his responsibilities as Agent-General as weighty and trailblazing:

In my little Department...there is little power, even if there were the wish, to call upon other people to solve points for us. We do our business for ourselves...All our questions are new; we are the pioneers who are feeling the way for others.¹⁶

Elliot relished tackling new challenges and mastering new topics. From his childhood years, he had displayed a thirst for knowledge and self-education.¹⁷ Whenever he found himself in a new environment or with new responsibilities, he developed an almost obsessive need to discover as much as possible about the subject or circumstances. Elliot himself recognized this compulsive side to his character and occasionally referred mockingly to it in private correspondence. During his voyage to Canada with the Gosford Commission in 1835, he reported how he had taken the opportunity to satisfy his 'passion' for the sea and informed

¹⁵ Elliot to Secretary of State, 28 April 1838, *B.P.P.* 1837-8 (388) XL, p. 6.

¹⁶ Elliot to Spring-Rice, 29 Jan. 1838, Memorandum: the duties & Emoluments of the Agent General for Emigration, Monteagle papers, 13,400/II/9.

¹⁷ Elliot memoir, n.d. July 1828, Elliot papers, MS 19432/176.

Henry Taylor that he had spent much of the voyage observing and conversing with members of the crew, from whom he ‘reaped a plentiful Harvest of marine knowledge with which on my return to astonish the Navigators of the waters that extend from London to Gravesend’.¹⁸ Fourteen years later, as Assistant Under-Secretary, he was tackling the issue of whether convict transportation should continue to Australia. In a letter to Lady Minto, he made sport of the fact that he had become so absorbed in the topic that he could not ‘any longer care for anybody who has not been a criminal’.¹⁹ His application to the management of emigration engendered no less intensity.

Much has been written about the role of ‘the expert’ in nineteenth-century administrative reform.²⁰ Specialists such as Edwin Chadwick, James Kay,²¹ and Hugh Tremenheere were noted for the particular expertise, knowledge and skills they brought to the areas of administration with which they were associated. In contrast, Elliot, whilst undoubtedly recognized as an efficient administrator by his peers and superiors, acquired his emigration expertise through practical experience within his own department. He cultivated new, specific skills and qualities to manage the new functions accrued by his bureau. Richard Johnson in his study on administrators in the Education Department suggested that new government responsibilities generated by particular perceptions of social and economic problems ‘created a need for kinds of expertise’. He concluded that government

¹⁸ Elliot to Taylor, 30 July, 1835, Elliot papers MS 19422/3.

¹⁹ Elliot to Nina, Lady Minto, 27 July 1849, MS 19452/152.

²⁰ For example see Frank Smith, *The Life and Work of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth* (London, 1923); S.E.Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (London, 1952); R.A. Lewis, *Edwin Chadwick and the Public Health Movement* (London, 1952); Richard Johnson, ‘Administrators in education before 1870’, in Sutherland, *Studies in the growth of nineteenth-century government*, pp. 110-38.

²¹ In 1842 he took the name Kay-Shuttleworth.

patronage was modified to recruit from 'those groups most active in the identification of problems, whether medical men, social investigators, statisticians...and so forth'. But he stressed that there was also a need for 'a new kind of élite, men of more general abilities who might make administrative rationalization and control their main objectives.' Johnson identified the 'old universities' as having been a source for such men.²² The emigration service, during its formative years, recruited neither external 'experts' nor a 'new kind of élite' from universities. Elliot and his staff were themselves the innovators and specialists in administering emigration. It was a subtle, progressive type of professionalism, in which the Agent-General's department and subsequently the CLEC gained improved appreciation and understanding of prevailing issues in the movement of population to British colonies.

Elliot achieved an impressive increase in the number of assisted emigrants leaving for Australia during the late 1830s and early 1840s. In 1837 he 'effected an emigration...three times as numerous as the average of previous years, and...in the present year [1838] he...carried on an emigration at the rate of between seven and eight times the average before his appointment'.²³ Over twenty thousand assisted emigrants left Britain in 1841 – the peak of emigration during Elliot's period of direct superintendence of assisted emigration. He was evidently well satisfied with his contribution to the administration and supervision of emigration. Writing in 1868 following his retirement from the Colonial Office, he recalled:

this [Emigration] Office I created and organized from the beginning, being originally it's [sic] sole Chief and eventually chairman of the Commission

²² Johnson, 'Administrators', p. 138.

²³ Colonial Office to the Treasury, 18 July 1838, CO 384/49.

into which it expanded. The number of persons whose emigration...[I] superintended up to the present date has been Five Millions. When I commenced the number of letters in the year, in and out, was 1,600, and the total number of Emigrants from the United Kingdom, 33,000; when I left ten years afterwards, the number of letters in the year was 79,000 and the number of Emigrants 250,000....I only claim that the Office cannot have been badly organized which stood the sudden strain of so extraordinary an increase of business.²⁴

Elliot could not have achieved this remarkable increase in emigrant numbers nor handled the huge expansion of correspondence and administration simply by diligence and pragmatism. He needed to bring other qualities to bear upon his work. So how did Elliot achieve this increase in emigration? How did he organize and superintend the recruitment of emigrants? As Elliot had extensive duties and a steadily increasing workload, he recognized that new procedures and regulations were needed if he was to have any significant impact on the system of government assisted emigration. Two key approaches can be identified: first, active promotion to publicise the government scheme; and second, meticulous organisation and co-ordination in an attempt to bring structure to the existing amorphous nature of emigration.

Publicising government schemes

Dissemination of information about government schemes was a crucial

²⁴ Elliot memorandum, n.d. Nov. 1868, Elliot papers, MS 19432/224. The numbers to which Elliot referred are for the total number of emigrants, including unassisted. For the number of government-assisted emigrants in relation to total emigration see Appendix 4.

element in emigrant recruitment. Elliot had recognized the benefit of publicity from an early stage of his dealings with emigration and his previous experience and participation in the administration of assisted emigration was invaluable. It had been Elliot's responsibility as secretary to the Emigration Commissioners of 1831 to draw up and arrange the printing and distribution of leaflets and pamphlets which set out details of the help available. He had continued to perform these duties following the Commissioners' dismissal.²⁵ Always sensitive to the influence of publicity, Elliot also placed advertisements in the press and supervised the circulation of printed notices and posters for public display.²⁶ Correspondence from Elliot to the Duke of Richmond²⁷ reveals the high priority Elliot gave to distribution of emigration literature, suggesting on one occasion that the printing of notices should take precedence over preparation of a report for Secretary of State, Lord Goderich.²⁸ The promotional literature became more sophisticated and carried greater detail as government emigration schemes developed. It was a major publicity tool, which Elliot used to great effect - first as Agent-General and later as chairman of the CLEC.

Critical to the promotional aspect of Elliot's work was the network of official and private contacts he established throughout Britain. Section 62 of the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) empowered English and Welsh parishes to raise

²⁵ Elliot to Foster, 13 July 1832, CO 385/14; see also memorandum from Elliot to Richmond, 4 Apr. 1832, Goodwood papers MS 648 f. 89. J.D. Pinnock, a temporary clerk with the Colonial Office was appointed Emigration Agent for NSW in 1835. Pinnock had worked with Elliot during the early emigration schemes and he continued Elliot's practice of distributing circulars and other promotional emigration literature. For details of Pinnock's recruiting activities see Haines, *Emigration*, pp. 80-6.

²⁶ Copies of circulars, posters and leaflets are included in C.O. 384/42.

²⁷ See for example Elliot to Richmond, 7 Mar, n.d.; 4 April, n.d.; 14 July 1832; n.d.; Goodwood papers 648 f. 23; 648 f. 89; 650 ff. 24; 648 f. 88.

²⁸ Elliot to Richmond, 3 Feb. 1832, Goodwood papers 647 f. 69.

money against the security of the poor rates to assist poor parishioners to emigrate to the non-tropical British colonies.²⁹ Four years later, the Irish Poor Law Act (1838) included provision for Poor Law Commissioners to defray the expenses of poor emigrants travelling to the colonies. Parishes willing to aid Elliot by promoting assisted emigration were able to obtain free passages for eligible emigrants. Elliot therefore needed to establish effective channels of communication between the Poor Law Commission, the Poor Law guardians, clergy and other parish officers. Landowners and local gentry throughout Britain were also invaluable in providing a network of patronage that supported and encouraged assisted emigration. These formal and informal agencies, complemented by some of Elliot's aristocratic acquaintances³⁰ gave him the opportunity to draw from an extensive reservoir of influential connections. Florence Chuk, in her study of Somerset government-assisted emigrants who travelled to Victoria, observed that local inhabitants became aware of the availability of free passages 'from posters placed about the towns, from advertisements in local newspapers, and from the pulpits of their parish churches'.³¹

Elliot used his contacts productively to find suitable persons willing to emigrate. Colonial Office records³² reveal the extent and utility of these networks.

²⁹ For a detailed examination of parish-aided emigration see G. Howells, 'Emigrants and Emigrators: A Study of Emigration and the New Poor Law with special reference to Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Norfolk, 1834-1860' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1996); G. Howells, ' "For I was tired of England Sir": English pauper emigrant strategies, 1834-60, *Social History*, 23 (1998), pp. 181-94; Robin F. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-60* (Basingstoke and London, 1997).

³⁰ For example, the Duke of Richmond, Lord Monteagle, the 4th Earl of Clarendon.

³¹ F. Chuk, *The Somerset Years: Government-Assisted Emigrants from Somerset and Bristol who arrived in Port Phillip Victoria 1839-1854* (Ballarat, 1987), p. 18.

³² See for example: Agent General's emigration correspondence, CO 384/42-57, CLEC correspondence, CO 384/58-9.

Those interested in an assisted passage to the Australian colonies could apply for application forms to a parish relieving officer, the local landowner, clergy, or to the Agent-General directly. Obviously for people to be aware of the opportunities available for assisted passages, active dissemination of information about the government scheme was essential. Elliot was always looking for openings for his promotional material and always eager for help by these agencies. Correspondence between Elliot and the Reverend Mr. Deeds of Tunbridge exemplifies the exchanges between the emigration office and parish authorities and the opportunities which were exploited by both parties. Deeds was anxious to obtain assisted passages for some of his parishioners and was keen, therefore, to distribute notices on behalf of Elliot. Elliot was delighted to oblige and expressed his obligation to Deeds for his assistance.³³

In addition to supervising the distribution of promotional literature, Elliot invited parish officers and gentry landlords to submit names of proposed emigrants. A selection officer, usually a naval surgeon from one of the emigration offices at the ports of embarkation, would examine the applicants and make the decision regarding their eligibility. Elliot's instructions for recruitment were precise, and although surgeons were allowed some discretion, he made it clear that recruiting officers were to adhere closely to the guidelines. Elliot insisted on careful selection of emigrants. Some individual applications were made directly to the emigration office in Downing Street³⁴ and he handled these letters and applications himself.

³³ Elliot to Deeds, 7 Dec. 1837, CO 386/21.

³⁴ Initially the Agent-General's office was in 14 Downing Street, within the Colonial Office. In 1838 it was moved to 2 Middle Scotland Yard, and from 1840 the CLEC were housed at 9 Park Street.

Those applicants who appeared to be suitable, were then referred to the selecting surgeon.

Associations evolved between Elliot's emigration office and his network of agencies, therefore, which could be mutually advantageous. Administrators of poor relief had the opportunity to save considerably on the poor rates, while at the same time providing Elliot and his recruiting officers with a source of willing emigrants. Evidence produced in the Poor Law Commissioners' Report 1834 revealed that experiments undertaken to fund emigration at parishes' expense had 'generally been satisfactory'. Some examples were particularly noteworthy. Parish expenditure had been reduced by one third over a four year period in the Parish of Benenden, Kent due to the effects of emigration. The Commissioners reported that 'the whole expense of the poor...has been considerably reduced from the very year the emigration commenced'.³⁵ Poor Law authorities, therefore, saw the possible advantages that liaison with Elliot and his emigration service could achieve. For landlords also, it was an opportunity to relieve their estates of excess and redundant labour and their dependants for whom they had paternalist responsibilities. David Ricardo³⁶ of Gatcombe Park, Gloucestershire, for example, made several applications to Elliot's office for free passages for some of his tenants.³⁷

But the potential benefits to those emigrants who were selected should not be overlooked. The Reverend Abner Brown and the administrators of poor relief in Pytchley saw assisted emigration as 'a golden opportunity to save the parish

³⁵ *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, (London, 1834), p. 354.

³⁶ Son of David Ricardo (1772-1823), the political economist.

³⁷ See for example, Elliot to Ricardo, 23 Oct. 1839; Walpole to Ricardo 31 Jan. 1840, CO 386/24.

considerable sums of money while affording to some destitute parishioners the chance of a new life'.³⁸ For those who were not faint-hearted and were willing to take the bold step of undertaking the long and hazardous passage to Australia, who ventured to leave their extended family and community, emigration presented an opportunity for amelioration.

More advantageously from the emigration service's standpoint, was the fact that these complementary local agencies provided financial help to eligible emigrants. Such aid was essential if families were to take advantage of the free passages available. Money for an initial deposit, travel costs to the ports of embarkation, provision of the necessary clothing,³⁹ basic tools, and provisions for the voyage was essential, as these expenses were not met by the government.⁴⁰ Emigrants also required money for their immediate use following their arrival in the colony, until they secured employment. Camm calculated that the cost for aiding two families from the parish of Pytchley, Northamptonshire who received government-assisted passages to Australia in 1838 amounted to 'a little over £60'.⁴¹ Without this assistance, Elliot would have found recruitment much more difficult.⁴² As he observed to Clarendon,

³⁸ Jack Camm, 'Emigration on the Parish - From Pytchley and Poverty to the Australian Colonies 1838-1850', *Push from the Bush, A Bulletin of Social History*, 17 (1984), p.31.

³⁹ More clothing was required for emigration to Australia than to British North America. Due to the long voyage and the climatic changes of the passage, two sets of clothing were required.

⁴⁰ The Emigration Office provided cooking utensils, provisions, mattresses, bedding, linen, crockery and cutlery. A comprehensive list of articles emigrants were required to take on board and items provided by the Emigration Office was included in Regulations booklets issued by the Agent-General and later the CLEC. See for example *Regulations for Selection of Emigrants 1851* (London, 1851).

⁴¹ J. Camm, 'Emigration on the Parish', p. 35.

⁴² The role of the parish is discussed in greater detail in Camm, 'Emigration on the Parish', pp. 29-38; Howells, 'Emigrants and Emigrators'. For an insight into the aid provided by landlords see C. O'Mahony and V. Thompson, *Poverty to Promise: the Montegle Emigrants 1838-58* (Sydney, 1994).

as every Emigrant must be furnished with clothing for this long voyage which costs £4 or £5, and must be sent to the place of embarkation at his own expense, the cost becomes quite equal to that of sending him out to North America without any free passage at all.⁴³

Elliot hoped that his dealings with the Poor Law agencies would not prejudice the colonial authorities and employers against government-assisted emigrants arriving on Australia's shores. But he was too much of a realist to expect this outcome. Elliot was cognizant of apprehensions in the colonies about the 'quality' of emigrants recruited and recognised that his dealings with Poor Law authorities exacerbated suspicions. He was convinced, however, that parishes could provide a more comprehensive view of the state of employment throughout the country and the willingness of people to emigrate than any other intermediary. Acutely aware that improvement in economic circumstances, however short term, could be detrimental to his recruitment programme, Elliot emphasized the uncertainty of people's willingness to emigrate:

the inclination of the people to emigrate is by no means so unlimited as used to be supposed – the improvements which have been effected in the character & condition of the Agricultural population in Eng & Wales, have considerably diminished the belief in the existence of a general redundancy of labour, and necessarily affect both the disposition of the people to go, - and of the others to send them.

He was adamant that his office must take the opportunities offered by liaison with the Poor Law authorities. While he knew that a 'sensitive apprehension' existed in the colonies of an influx of pauper emigrants, Elliot stressed that the benefits of

⁴³ Elliot to Clarendon, 5 Sept. 1847, Clarendon papers, Clar. dep. Irish, Box 11.

and the motives behind the contact was the provision of 'General information', not the procurement of paupers.⁴⁴

Elliot was willing to embrace any arrangement which enabled him to fulfil his duties more progressively. Colonial administration inevitably tended to be reactive. Administration of emigration was no exception. Colonial Office correspondence reveals that Elliot and the CLEC were constantly having to respond to changing circumstances in the colonies or at home, or even to a specific colonial despatch. Where circumstances would allow, however, Elliot did attempt a more positive, measured approach. This was undoubtedly influenced and aided by his almost intuitive understanding of the fluctuating circumstances inherent in the emigration process and the vacillating resolve of prospective emigrants. Elliot demonstrated a keen and perceptive understanding of the emigrant's psyche. In the case of Bisley and Uley, for example, he was keen to proceed as quickly as possible with the recruitment process, as he was aware that the approaching harvest season would offer seasonal employment. Experience had taught him that this would probably encourage some people to change their minds.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Elliot knew that if selected emigrants had to wait too long before embarking on their journey, they were more than likely to have second thoughts. He recognized the value of making the necessary pre-embarkation arrangements promptly, as he was convinced that delay gave 'room for misgivings to come over them and perhaps a state of irresolution not less painful to themselves, than inconvenient to all concerned'.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42.

⁴⁵ Elliot to Grey, 28 April 1838, *B.P.P.* 1837-38 (388) XL, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Elliot to Stephen 24 June 1837, CO 384/42.

Elliot was writing with first-hand knowledge. Earlier that year two hundred prospective emigrants from Norfolk had applied for government assisted passages. Between their selection and the availability of a ship some months later, employment opportunities had improved and they refused to go.⁴⁷ On occasions when he was contemplating postponing a sailing, Elliot was anxious to establish if there were possibilities of revival in employment opportunities which could possibly lead to people changing their plans. Correspondence with Tufnell⁴⁸ revealed that Elliot sought advice about possible change in local employment conditions which might affect his arrangements. Concerned about postponing a government emigrant ship sailing from Kent, he wrote to Tufnell:

Will you tell me up to what date you think we might be free from the apprehensions of the people's changing their mind in consequence of a revival of work in the County...What I am anxious to have some means of judging, is whether by postponing it [the sailing]...we should encounter a risk of employments growing abundant enough at home to tempt our Candidates away from us.⁴⁹

It has been suggested that Elliot had 'a keen nose for county mobility and employment trends'.⁵⁰ This attribute owed much to Elliot's exploitation of his network of local contacts.

⁴⁷ Elliot to Grey, 28 April 1838, *B.P.P.* 1837-38 (388), XL, p. 6.

⁴⁸ E.C.Tufnell was Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. He was brother to Henry Tufnell, Whig M.P. 1840-54 and former private secretary to R.J.W.Horton and the 2nd Earl of Minto.

⁴⁹ See for example, Elliot to Tufnell, 3 Mar. 1838, CO 386/21.

⁵⁰ Haines, *Emigration*, p. 127.

Administrative approaches to emigration

Both the promotional dimension of Elliot's work and attempts to pre-empt emigrants' doubts were integral parts of the wider picture of Elliot's administrative methods – the promotion of efficiency and economy. On taking up his appointment as Agent-General, he was conscious that the emigration system was far from streamlined. He was keen to introduce changes if he thought they would be more effective, or speed up the recruitment process. His first report to the Secretary of State in July 1837, outlined changes he had already instigated.⁵¹ Several of these related to the criteria for recruitment which the colonial authorities had recommended. In the case of the first ship to sail for Australia following his appointment,⁵² Elliot had felt it advisable to relax the rules regarding the age limit. He had taken this decision following representations from two of the ships' surgeons who had reported that it was impossible to recruit while the age limit of 30 remained. Elliot authorised the limit to be extended to 35. He justified his decision by asserting that otherwise, he believed many valuable settlers might be lost to the colonies, as the lower age limit would deter people from applying. Elliot did stress, however that he would revert to the original limit if the system were abused.⁵³

To encourage efficiency, Elliot appointed three naval surgeons to superintend the recruitment of emigrants.⁵⁴ Previously, during his early days as Agent-General, surgeons from the Royal Navy selected emigrants and procured

⁵¹ Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42.

⁵² The ship *Augusta Bessie* sailed on 16 June 1837 with 234 passengers.

⁵³ Elliot to Stephen and for the attention of Lord Glenelg, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42.

⁵⁴ The surgeons appointed were: Dr. Inches for England, Dr. Boyter for Scotland, and Dr. Hall for Ireland. See 'Report of the Agent General for Emigration', *B.P.P.* 1837-38, (388) XL, pp.7-8.

ships for the government. This was a rather random arrangement, as surgeons had other naval responsibilities.⁵⁵ The new arrangements allowed a more orderly and consistent process of selection than the former one. Following their appointment, all selections of assisted emigrants to the Australian colonies were made by these government surgeons. Each one travelled extensively within his allotted area to select enough emigrants to fill the government chartered ships. As correspondence within the Colonial Office records reveal, Elliot closely monitored the work of these men.⁵⁶

Elliot's instructions to his field officers were detailed and reflected the meticulousness and assiduity with which he conducted his own duties. He kept in constant touch with the surgeons and emigration officers, making policy changes and modifications where he felt appropriate.⁵⁷ Instructions from Elliot to a new surgeon in July 1837 detailed the criteria to be used for selection. He stressed the need to secure emigrants of good character with 'industrious & respectable habits' and warned the surgeon that it was essential to avoid the selection of 'persons who have been at all addicted to intemperance as the temptations to that vice are much greater in NSW, from the climate & the cheapness of ardent spirits'.⁵⁸ These and other early reforms directed at making the emigration process more effective culminated in Elliot's circular of July 1838, 'Nature and Conditions of Assistance by Government to Emigrants to New South Wales'.⁵⁹ As Madgwick argued, these

⁵⁵ Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, Elliot's evidence, *B.P.P.* 1847 (737) VI, Q.30.

⁵⁶ See for example, Elliot to Inches, n.d. Jan.1838, CO 386/21.

⁵⁷ 'Report from Mr Elliot, Agent-General for Emigration', 28 April, 1838, CO 384/46.

⁵⁸ Elliot to New Surgeon, 3 July 1837, CO 384/42.

⁵⁹ A copy is enclosed in CO 384/47.

regulations reveal the great advance in emigration practice under Elliot's early regime.⁶⁰

Eager to streamline administrative procedure and to avoid unnecessary delays which affected field operations, Elliot occasionally raised issues with Stephen in the hope of simplifying office procedure. In 1838, he brought attention to the system of authorizing payments in respect of emigration to the agent for New South Wales. Stephen supported Elliot's view that the procedure was 'inconvenient and discreditable' as it often took weeks to approve the payments. Elliot recommended a more simplified method, which was approved by the Secretary of State.⁶¹

Economic considerations also guided Elliot's practices. Wherever possible, he favoured recruiting in areas with easy access to the ports from which emigrant ships sailed.⁶² This had the advantage of migrants having less distance to travel – an important consideration as transport costs could add considerably to emigrants' expenditure. But more significantly it also meant that his department's administration costs were kept to a minimum. Elliot had no influence over the choice of embarkation ports from which assisted emigrants departed. These were dictated by commercial interests. Liverpool, for example, as a major importer of wool from Australia and cotton from North America, was a natural out-port for emigration. The ships were fitted out for emigrants in the British ports and upon arrival in the colonies the bunks and other timber fittings were dismantled and sold along with other surplus items. This ensured maximum space for the return cargo.

⁶⁰ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 134.

⁶¹ There is extended correspondence regarding this between Elliot, Stephen and George Grey in CO 348/48.

⁶² See for example Elliot to Whittell, 11 March 1839, CO 386/22; Walpole to Wood, 18 Aug. 1837, CO 386/21.

Numbers of emigrants leaving from particular ports, therefore, tended to reflect the degree of commercial activity these ports had with the colonies.⁶³

Elliot repeatedly stressed that he favoured emigrants being recruited from one district. These aspects of the selection criteria were prominently displayed in printed publicity literature under the heading of 'limitations'. It was made very clear that

each ship must be filled from some particular District, and this precludes the acceptance of Candidates...who are not residing in a part of the County from which it is proposed to select a whole party sufficient to fill a Ship. Under this Rule, detached applicants of all kinds must unavoidably be refused.⁶⁴

Elliot was also keen to exploit his resources to the full. When recruitment was initiated in a specific area, Elliot would contact parish officers or landlords in that locality and encourage them to get in touch with the surgeon.⁶⁵ As Haines pointed out, such economy meant efficient use of the surgeon's services and colonial funds.⁶⁶

But there were also humanitarian aspects to Elliot's partiality for concentrating recruitment of emigrants in specific localities. Elliot believed that an important advantage of this practice was that large groups of emigrants would be

⁶³ For an examination of the role of private enterprise in emigration to Australia see Frank J.A. Broeze, 'Private Enterprise and the Peopling of Australia, 1831-50', *Economic History Review*, XXXV (1982), pp. 235-53.

⁶⁴ Government Emigration Office printed pamphlet 'Nature and Conditions of Assistance by Government to Emigrants to New South Wales', 27 July, 1838, CO 384/47.

⁶⁵ Walpole (in the absence of Elliot) to Wood, 18 Aug. 1837; Elliot to Beren, 3 Mar. 1838, CO 386/21; Elliot to Whittell, 11 March 1839, CO 386/22. This aspect of recruiting is discussed in greater detail in Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, Chapter 3.

⁶⁶ Haines, *Emigration*, p. 127.

acquainted with each other.⁶⁷ This was felt to be beneficial for emigrants not only during the voyage, but also on their arrival in Australia. Elliot's notion of encouraging the sustenance of 'community' is significant. It echoed observations made by the Poor Law Commissioners, who had deduced that pauper emigrants tended to have a 'longing for old associates and old associations'. The Commissioners had proposed therefore that:

emigrants from particular parishes and neighbourhoods in England should be directed, as far as possible, to the same townships or districts, in which the new comers would thus find old acquaintances, and manners with which they would be familiar. We believe that this precaution would commonly lessen their aversion to a new country.⁶⁸

This latter point reflected the concern of Poor Law authorities about the possibility of emigrants returning to their home country and once again becoming a burden to the parish. There had been occasions where paupers who had received financial aid from the local Board of Guardians to emigrate to British North America had returned. Keen to take steps to prevent recurrences of this, the Commissioners felt that emigrants who were drawn from the same locality settled into their life more readily than those who travelled with strangers. Emigrants to Australia were less likely to be able to afford the return fare or be prepared to endure another long voyage. However, many wrote to family and friends they had left behind.

Letters home played an important role in chain migration. The accuracy of emigrants' letters has frequently been questioned. As Patrick O'Farrell observed, the stereotyped emigrant letter – 'all well and doing well' – became 'a standing

⁶⁷ Elliot to J. O'Connell, M.P., 17 March 1838, CO 386/21.

⁶⁸ *Report of PLC*, p. 358.

joke'.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, not all letters home were misleading. Adverse reports from friends and family in the colonies could be powerful tools in deterring would-be emigrants. On the other hand, favourable accounts could be persuasive in encouraging those who were hesitant. Elliot was conscious of this and he himself used complimentary letters from Australian immigrants as a publicity tool to encourage interest in potential recruitment areas.⁷⁰ Elliot therefore, was keen to pursue practices which would minimise discontent among emigrants on the voyage and following their arrival.

Another strategy employed by Elliot to promote cohesion and fellowship was to advise selecting officers of the 'importance of as much as possible placing together the persons whose attainments and grade in Society, and previous habits, fit them the most to become companions'.⁷¹ Such practices undoubtedly had other benefits – the maintenance of harmony during the voyage, for example. Practical considerations were therefore apparent in Elliot's policy; nevertheless, Elliot's attention to the value of ties of friendship and local identity, in his recruitment programme for the Australian colonies, does appear to have been motivated to a significant extent by humanitarian concerns.

This general tendency for recruiting in limited and defined areas exposes the occasional short-sightedness of Elliot's strategy. His somewhat doctrinaire approach resulted in individual or small groups of otherwise eligible applicants

⁶⁹ P. O'Farrell, *Letters from Irish Australia 1825-1929* (Sydney and Belfast, 1984), p. 4.

⁷⁰ See for example Elliot to Ricardo, 23 Oct. 1839, CO 386/24. When Elliot was recruiting emigrants for the recently settled Port Phillip district, he reported that 'I cannot of course have the same assurance of collecting them [emigrants] for a new place as for districts, to which a considerable number of the friends and neighbours of people in this country have already proceeded; but it will be my duty to do my best'. Elliot to Stephen, 18 Dec. 1838, *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol. 4, 'Communications, Trade and Transport', ed. by Michael Cannon and Ian Macfarlane (Melbourne, 1985), p. 260.

⁷¹ Elliot to Rogers, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42.

being rejected as they were not residing within the current recruitment areas.⁷²

Taking into account the difficulties Elliot and his staff frequently encountered in recruiting eligible emigrants, his inflexibility seems incongruous. But there were occasions when such dictates were relaxed, provided the prospective emigrants met the personal eligibility criteria.⁷³ Moreover, if he were able to combine the numbers from several areas within a region in order to fill a ship, he would do so.⁷⁴

But Elliot was also careful not to recruit repeatedly from one area. His preferred practice was 'rather to give different places the benefit of our successive Ships, than expend them all upon the accommodation of one spot.' He was however willing to fill more ships from one area rather than lose 'useful Settlers'.⁷⁵

Elliot's personal attributes

Additional components of Elliot's administrative style and technique relate to two of his natural attributes - his intelligence and rationality. From his earliest days in the Colonial Office these qualities were apparent. Charles Greville noted that he would 'go far' as he had an 'admirable talent for business, a clear head, liberal and unprejudiced opinions, and writes well'.⁷⁶ Stephen, not renowned for expressing approval or admiration of members of his young clerks,⁷⁷ had declared to Howick that Elliot, along with his colleague Murdoch, had 'powers and aptitude

⁷² See for example Elliot to Whittell, 11 Mar. 1839, CO 386/22.

⁷³ Walpole to Wood, 18 Aug. 1837, CO 386/21.

⁷⁴ Series of letters between Elliot and D. Ricardo, 1839, CO 386/22.

⁷⁵ Elliot to Tufnell, 6 Mar. 1838, CO 386/21.

⁷⁶ C.C.F. Greville, *The Greville memoirs: first part*, vol. iii (London, 1887), p.325.

⁷⁷ See for example Stephen's 'private & confidential memorandum', 30 Mar. 1832, in which he is critical of younger members of the Colonial Office. He regretted that they 'are almost wholly exempt from the discipline which their age required; and are probably devoting their leisure hours much more to fashionable society than to those studies which should fit them for the position to which they aspire'. CO 537/22.

of such a nature as would...ensure success and even eminence' in colonial administration.⁷⁸ In the last months of his career, these qualities were still in evidence. Following a series of meetings with Elliot, the Duke of Buckingham and Charles Adderley concerning the proposed transfer of the Hudson Bay territory to Canada, the Earl of Kimberley wrote, 'the Duke spoke sensibly...Elliot is his prompter...Elliot is the only man at the Col: Off: who understands the business. He has as much brain as Bucks & Adderley combined, & to spare'.⁷⁹ Elliot's intellect and rationality were central in enabling him to assess and evaluate situations and problems.

Shrewdness and ingenuity were also apparent, as can be seen in his manipulation and management of the network of contacts and his negotiations with Poor Law authorities and informal local agencies. Without these qualities, it is unlikely that Elliot could have controlled the business of assisted emigration so effectively, and for so long. Thomas Carlyle was at times severely critical of government administration and felt that such work was usually 'ill done'. He did not expect any improvement until the executive selected 'good workmen'. Where there were good men, however, he found they could be ineffective due to the sheer volume of work.⁸⁰ He had soon recognized Elliot's 'ingenuity',⁸¹ and of Elliot's ability he was in no doubt. After being informed by Elliot that he could not offer an assisted passage to members of the Carlyle family, Carlyle wrote, 'there is no use applying elsewhere...he [Elliot] is a most punctual, accurate and one of the

⁷⁸ Stephen to Howick, 10 Feb. 1832, Grey papers, GRE/B126/11.

⁷⁹ A. Hawkins and J. Powell (eds.), *The Journal of John Wodehouse First Earl of Kimberley*, Camden Fifth series, vol. 9 (London, 1997), p. 225.

⁸⁰ E. Jenks, *Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill* (Orpington, 1888; rep. Bristol, 1990), p. 17.

⁸¹ Carlyle to Wilson, 21 Sept. 1837, in C.R. Sanders, K.J. Fielding et al. (eds.), *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. ii (Durham, North Carolina, 1985), p. 190.

clearest-sighted men and undertakes...what he means to practice...He is...a man in the very best estimation here'.⁸²

Elliot would at times show his frustration when his subordinates or colleagues did not display the same quick-wittedness or initiative as himself. Responding to Low, the emigration officer at Liverpool, who had written to him regarding the lack of support from the custom officers in dealing with foreign vessels, Elliot informed him, 'I am surprized that it should be left to me to suggest the obvious answer'.⁸³ A similar tone was taken with emigration agent Pinnock, following his inquiry as to the amount of accommodation allowed to steerage passengers. Elliot's response was terse - 'You know as well as I what is the amount of the accommodation that can be allowed to them'.⁸⁴

A significant area of Elliot's and the CLEC's responsibility was overseeing the work of the corps of emigration officers (also known as emigration agents). These officers had been appointed in response to the calls for the need for enforcement of the Passenger Act 1828 and personnel for dealing with complaints.⁸⁵ In 1837, Elliot had agents in ten ports throughout Britain and Ireland.⁸⁶ The emigration corps was a vital component of the business of emigration. Although they had no power of selection, they provided information to prospective emigrants and supervised arrangements for the emigrant ships,

⁸² Carlyle to Welsh, n.d., in Sanders, Fielding et al. (eds.), *Collected Letters*, vol. xv, p. 181.

⁸³ Elliot to Low, 25 May 1837, CO 386/19.

⁸⁴ Elliot to Pinnock, 23 Jan. 1838, CO 386/21.

⁸⁵ For an account of the work and development of the emigration officers see O. MacDonagh, 'Emigration and the State, 1833-55: an essay in administrative history', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, vol.5 (1955) pp.133-59; O. MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth 1800-60*, pp. 91-137.

⁸⁶ Lt. Lean at London, Lt. Low at Liverpool (with Lt. Jones as assistant), Lt. Henry at Bristol, Lt. Hodder at Dublin, Lt. Friend at Cork, Lt. Miller at Belfast, Lt. Shuttleworth at Sligo, Lt. Lynch at Limerick, Lt. Forest at Leith and Lt. Hemmens at Greenock.

provisions of food and water, and health and safety of the passengers. They also provided information on conditions and labour requirements in the colonies. An important function was to prevent unscrupulous shipowners and agents from exploiting naive emigrants while still in the ports. Lieutenant Low had been the first emigration officer appointed and had taken up his post at Liverpool in January 1833.⁸⁷ Low and his fellow officers had received no specific training for their posts. They were an uncoordinated association of officers with little supervision and no nominated adviser. Elliot recognized that in order to make the corps more effective, he would need to introduce leadership and control. Correspondence between Elliot and his officers reveal that he was especially concerned to ensure there was consistency in interpretation and application of the Passenger Act.⁸⁸ Elliot undoubtedly brought a greater degree of uniformity, direction and discipline amongst the corps and more especially, to passenger protection.⁸⁹

Despite the positive achievements of Elliot's early years of administering emigration, his heavy workload inevitably curbed the pace of development. Madgwick argued that although Elliot combined a profound knowledge of colonial problems with untiring energy and high ideals of public service, the task of controlling the government emigration system became too great for him.⁹⁰ Some relief was granted in 1839 with an increase in the establishment of Elliot's emigration office. Elliot was successful in his request to the Secretary of State to appoint John Walpole as assistant in April 1838.⁹¹ Three clerks were also

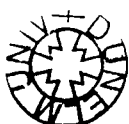
⁸⁷ Letter from mayor of Liverpool to Goderich 4 Jan. 1833, C.O. 384/33.

⁸⁸ Elliot memorandum, 17 July 1837, CO 386/19. This is discussed in MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 127-8.

⁸⁹ Passenger protection will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

⁹⁰ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 128.

⁹¹ Elliot to Glenelg, 2 Apr. 1838, CO 386/21; Hitchins, *Colonial Land*, p. 27.



employed to relieve Elliot of the burden of the more mundane clerical routine and correspondence. At the end of 1839 there was an established Emigration Office, which constituted part of the Colonial Office, with an Agent-General for Emigration, an assistant, three clerks, plus a corps of eleven emigration officers. Despite this increase and the establishment of the CLEC in 1840, Elliot's clerical staff remained numerically limited. The calibre and effectiveness of his staff, therefore, becomes significant. What criteria did Elliot employ for recruiting his assistants and clerks? How did he organise his office?

Organisation of Elliot's department

Elliot wanted talented men for the emigration service. Although Elliot himself was recruited to public service through patronage, it is clear that he had little confidence that the system would fulfil the needs of his department. The qualities Elliot looked for in his clerks and his attitude to the recruitment of civil servants were clearly articulated during a conversation with Nassau Senior in 1855, in which they discussed the proposals for civil service appointments in the wake of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854. He stressed the need for government departments to select men who would be 'good public servants'. The established system of patronage, Elliot believed, did not encourage the appointment of efficient clerks. He was severely critical of the Treasury's influence.

When the head of a department fills a vacancy, he has some little interest in taking a good man. The Treasury has none. The head of a department too, if he selects from his own friends, probably takes a gentleman. The

treasury [sic] takes the creatures of the members who support the Govt, the relations of the provincial patriot, or perhaps the patriot himself.⁹²

In organising the emigration office and subsequently the CLEC, Elliot had been 'allowed to establish and carry it on without any of the patronage being granted by the Treasury'. Initially he had selected the clerks himself – from families that he knew had already provided good public servants. 'The sons & brothers of blockheads', he informed Senior, he rejected. However, some of those who had failed in their attempts to secure employment in the emigration office were appointed to positions in the Colonial Office. This was much to Elliot's regret as, following his appointment as Assistant Under-Secretary, he had them under his supervision and found them 'as dull as the others of their race'.

Elliot was scathing in his condemnation of the criteria which determined the selection of most public servants. He ridiculed the way clerks were appointed as a result of political pressure. He drew comparisons between private organizations which dismissed employees who did not carry out their duties efficiently, and government departments which, he declared, retained 'everyone who is not found out picking pockets or gambling on the stock exchange'. Even when the selection of clerks fell to other senior staff, Elliot endeavoured to ensure that his standards were maintained. Furthermore, he had continually attempted to gain promotion for his 'best men', even though in some cases it resulted in their departure from the emigration office – usually to other departments of the Colonial Office. Elliot felt this was justified as the effect was that, even allowing for the few unsatisfactory

⁹² Senior journal, 18 Jan. 1855, Senior papers, A19 /96.

appointments, the Colonial Office had a 'body of men far superior to those in any of the public offices'.⁹³

Yet although Elliot appointed staff on ability and merit to ensure efficiency in his department, his regard for economic husbandry was also in evidence. As the bulk of Elliot's and his staff's salaries were provided by colonial revenue, he was well aware that he was 'spending the money of the colonies'. Elliot felt compelled to use it in the most effective manner, by appointing the best staff with the available funds. Always attentive to long-term developments, he was also conscious that the colonies were vigilant of the way the proceeds from their land sales were spent. Elliot observed, 'Nothing but the utmost efficiency will induce them to trust us with it [colonial revenue]'.⁹⁴ Accordingly then, Elliot sought staff who he believed would give value for money.

But he also believed that men should be paid salaries commensurate with their ability. He felt the Northcote-Trevelyan proposals for competition for civil appointments were misconceived as 'no men with talents diligence & ambition will submit to the drudgery of clerkship'. Moreover, he was firm in his opinion that to recruit and retain efficient public servants, they must firstly be paid a realistic salary. These were no empty words, as his actions within his own department revealed. In 1838 he had requested that his assistant John Walpole, who was 'on loan' from the Colonial Office to the emigration service, be placed on the permanent establishment of Elliot's Department. Elliot prized Walpole as a 'most competent' clerk but noted that in order to induce him to accept a permanent position within Elliot's office, the clerk must receive 'an adequate [financial]

⁹³ Senior journal, 18 Jan. 1855, Senior papers, A19 /96.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

inducement'.⁹⁵ Stephen Walcott was another civil servant who Elliot felt should be rewarded financially for his 'ability'. Shortly after becoming Assistant Under-Secretary, Elliot recommended an increase from £650 to £800 per annum for Walcott, secretary to the CLEC, whom he described as a devoted public servant who had been 'long working early and late...to discharge his duty and carry on the [emigration] service successfully'.⁹⁶

Although he had reservations about the value of examinations securing the best clerks, Elliot wished earnestly to see a test for the purpose of exclusion to keep out 'the actual dolts'.⁹⁷ He agreed to some extent with the report's suggestion that for every vacancy three people should be examined. But he argued that this selection process would not be effective without taking into account his 'exclusion' plan. He insisted that examinations should not be to uncover the best candidate, but to ensure that candidates reached a minimum standard. Nor did Elliot support the control of a central agency with responsibility for competitive examinations to ensure uniform standards throughout the public service. Independent examiners, he declared, did not know the service as well as the permanent head of the office.⁹⁸ More significantly, no one had such an interest in the calibre of the chosen candidate as those under whom the applicant would

⁹⁵ Elliot to Spring Rice, Memorandum regarding the duties and Emoluments of the Agent General for Emigration, 29 Jan. 1838, Monteagle papers, 13,400/II/9. Spring Rice was at this time Chancellor of the Exchequer. Elliot suggested Walpole should receive a fixed salary of £350 per year.

⁹⁶ Endorsement by Elliot in CLEC to Merivale, 24 Feb. 1848, CO 384/82.

⁹⁷ Senior journal, 18 Jan. 1855, Senior papers, A19/94.

⁹⁸ In May 1855, the Palmerston administration decreed that junior clerks entering the Civil Service must be appointed by a process of competitive examination. The details of the actual test and selection procedure however, were left to individual departments. From May 1855 the Colonial Office operated a selection procedure which combined patronage and competition. Senior officers from the Department set the examination which spanned three days. For more detailed discussion of the effects of competitive examinations for Colonial Office appointments see J. W. Cell, 'The Colonial Office in the 1850s', *Historical Studies*, 12 (1965), pp.43-56.

serve. One or two men from the 'higher officers' in each department could form an examining board. Again, he was speaking from experience, as he had always taken an active role and responsibility for recruitment in his department.

The issue of evaluating the performance of newly appointed staff was another area about which Elliot held strong views. He considered the proposed probationary period of one year to be much too long as

in a year the idle or ignorant clerk has made friends, he has given to the public what he calls valuable time, he has perhaps lost other opportunities.

It is thought hard to dismiss him...I took my people on only a month's trial, & dismissed without mercy all that did not suit me.⁹⁹

But he worked hard to acquire and retain for the emigration service those who did meet with his approval. Stephen Walcott, of whom Elliot thought highly, was one such employee. Shortly after the establishment of the CLEC Elliot suggested Walcott should be appointed as secretary to the Commissioners. Initially, the suggestion of an appointment of a secretary had been turned down. But within the first few weeks, Walcott was put forward as a potential candidate to fill the role. The Commissioners differed over the appointment, but Elliot's will prevailed. Russell, Secretary of State at this time, reconsidered the situation and supported Elliot's choice of secretary.¹⁰⁰ Walcott became an experienced and valued member of the CLEC and eventually he himself became a Commissioner. His contribution to emigration was significant.

Career advancement was another area which Elliot felt was crucial for ensuring a high standard for the service. He firmly believed in a 'Ladder of

⁹⁹ Senior journal, 18 Jan. 1855, Senior papers, A19/97-8.

¹⁰⁰ Hitchins, *Colonial Land*, pp. 60-1.

Promotion which every one...at the bottom of the Office may expect, if found qualified, to ascend.' Staff should have been able to feel that only they could succeed to vacancies arising in the Office as 'something of this kind appears to afford no more than a fit Security to those who enter the [Public] Service early, and are willing to spend their lives in it'. Elliot believed that employees needed to feel valued. However, he also stressed that if this system of progress was strictly enforced, it could prevent the selection of

the very best person...If such a person happened to be found on the Establishment itself, he might of course be most properly selected; but the sole motive should be his own merits, and not the accident of his being already in the Office....Such are the grounds on which [the office] appears to me the best constituted, in which a large proportion of the members may look with security to a particular course of promotion in case of fitness, but in which on the other hand the Chief can from time to time both recruit its' (sic) Talents in the most arduous or critical Posts, and also supply its' (sic) wants in those which demand a special vocation.¹⁰¹

Elliot was shrewd enough to recognize the benefit of trying to keep existing staff content by the knowledge that they could in normal circumstances expect to achieve promotion. But at the same time he favoured the provision of being able to recruit men of high calibre from outside the office. The careers of Walpole and Walcott are testimony to Elliot's 'flexible' approach.

Elliot's views about the calibre of public servants were generally compatible with those of his former superior, James Stephen, who on occasion had

¹⁰¹ Elliot memorandum on Office Establishment, 22 June, 1848, Elliot papers, MS 19432/62.

been so disparaging about some employees of the Colonial Office and particularly about the system of patronage. Stephen recalled,

The majority of the members of the colonial department in my time possessed only in a low degree, and some of them in a degree almost incredibly low, either talents or the habits of men of business, or the industry, the zeal or the knowledge required for effective performance of their appropriate functions...they were...men who had been appointed to gratify the political, the domestic, or the personal feelings of their patrons, that is, of successive secretaries of state.¹⁰²

Snelling and Barron argued that during the early 1830s senior civil servants in the Colonial Office put forward many proposals for the reform of the office – their objective being to ‘ensure for the public service both a more plentiful supply of able men and a fairer scope for the exercise of their abilities’.¹⁰³ Sutherland suggested that it was ‘as much a remarkable coincidence as anything else’ that from the 1820s the Colonial Office had been looking out for quality recruits, such as advocated by the Northcote-Trevelyan report.¹⁰⁴ But rather than assessing this trend as mere chance, the influence at that time of particular civil servants who were themselves gifted administrators should not be overlooked. Hay, Stephen, Henry Taylor, Spedding and Elliot became talented senior permanent officials who, as the volume of work grew dramatically, recognized the value of employing men of ability and diligence. Stephen’s period of office was particularly influential.

¹⁰² Papers relating to the Reorganization of the Civil Service, *B.P.P.* 1854-5, XX, p. 450. Stephen had expressed similar sentiments two decades previously, see for example Stephen memorandum, ‘Private and Confidential’, 30 March 1832, CO 537/22.

¹⁰³ James Spedding, *Reviews and Discussions* (London, 1879), p. 1, cited in R.C. Snelling and T.J. Barron, ‘The Colonial Office: its permanent officials 1801-1914’, in Sutherland (ed.), *Studies in the growth of nineteenth-century government*, pp. 139-66 at p. 146.

¹⁰⁴ G. Sutherland, ‘Introduction’, *ibid.*, pp. 1-10 at p. 7.

In evaluating Elliot's role as an administrator Stephen's influence cannot be ignored. He transformed the organization of the Colonial Office. Knaplund described his industry as 'phenomenal'. But more significantly he had admirable organizational skills. He transformed the way business was handled in the Colonial Office by devising methods which expedited business. He used senior clerks for the more challenging work, leaving junior clerks the more routine business. He was also skilful in stating his ideas 'clearly and forcefully'.¹⁰⁵ To a significant extent, Elliot was a product of Stephen's reign at the Colonial Office. Much of Elliot's style of administration reflected Stephen's approach. Both were meticulous in preparation of reports. Both displayed clarity and analytical skills. Knaplund described Stephen as belonging to the few public servants at that time who genuinely favoured retrenchment.¹⁰⁶ This attitude was no doubt deeply embedded in his subordinates and may well explain Elliot's often-stated maxim, that colonial funds must be spent wisely and efficiently.

Elliot saw his office as a microcosm of the Colonial Office. During the formative years of the emigration service, Elliot introduced what he perceived as the best practices of the Colonial Office. He tried to avoid its imperfections and sought to establish a branch of the Colonial Service that employed the best staff and the best administrative methods. Despite these endeavours and the progress he and his office undoubtedly made, Elliot was severely criticized for his deficient management of emigration.

¹⁰⁵ Knaplund, *Sir James Stephen*, p.17.

¹⁰⁶ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p.53.

Criticism of the management of emigration

Colonial reformers, employers, legislators and newspapers in the colonies were particularly censorious of the 'quality' of assisted emigrants who landed on their shores. They accused Elliot of demonstrating more concern for the relief of Britain's economic and social problems than colonial needs and preferences. He responded by stating that he recruited the best that was available. The colonies needed to understand, he stressed, that when there were economic improvements in agricultural areas of England and Wales, people were less keen to emigrate, and others less willing to assist them. He was sensitive of the widespread belief in the colonies that the imperial government merely filled the emigrant ships with paupers.¹⁰⁷ It was to prove extremely difficult for Elliot and his staff to implement in Britain, where socio-economic circumstances were in a state of flux, the recruitment guidelines dictated in the colonies. As colonists provided the money for government assisted emigration, they were exacting in their demands and requirements. They demanded the best class of British workman. Elliot on the other hand recognized only too well that the best class of workman was not always available and willing to emigrate. He frequently pointed out in reports and dispatches that the colonists failed to appreciate the problems of recruitment and that he was always constrained by the availability of willing souls.

The most vocal criticism centred around the comparison of the government system and the bounty system. These systems of emigration were operating in tandem when Elliot took up his post as Agent-General. Under the government scheme, Elliot's office chartered the ship and paid the emigrant's passages, charging

¹⁰⁷ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p.53.

the costs to the colonial government. Government assistance was financed individually by each colony's treasury, primarily from funds collected from the sale of waste land.

The bounty system was operated by the colonial government through private shipowners and monitored by Elliot and his department. It was introduced in New South Wales by Governor Darling in 1831 and enabled settlers who brought out migrants to claim a bounty. Following the successful inspection on arrival of each person by an immigration officer, the bounty was claimed by those persons authorized to introduce candidates. If an immigrant was rejected as unfit due to character, age, health or occupation, payment was refused and the cost borne by the shipowner. The colonists usually preferred this scheme, as it gave them more control of the selection of immigrants and costs tended to be lower. Following the establishment of the CLEC, more control over this system was given to Elliot and his fellow commissioners, as bounties were no longer paid on immigrants arriving in the colonies who did not possess a CLEC certificate indicating their occupations and ages.¹⁰⁸

The government system came under severe criticism from colonists and colonial officials. They highlighted two main areas of contention regarding the emigrants who landed. Firstly, they claimed that too many children accompanied government immigrants and, more significantly, immigrants included paupers who were often ill during the voyage and were unsuitable for work. Secondly, they pointed out that many government immigrants were older than bounty immigrants

¹⁰⁸ Russell to Gipps, 7 Oct. 1840, CO 202/43.

and therefore less suitable as settlers.¹⁰⁹ To assess the validity of these claims, Elliot's principles concerning the selection and 'quality' of government-aided emigrants must now be examined.

¹⁰⁹ For a comparison of the two schemes see R.J.Schultz, *The Assisted Immigrants*.

Chapter 3

The 'quality' of assisted emigrants

Pessimistic representations of government-assisted immigrants have pervaded Australian immigration history. Contemporary colonial criticism directed at the 'quality' and moral character of these immigrants was unremitting and at times severe. Despite strongly defensive statements from the Colonial Office, the dominant impression was that those whom were aided by the government emigration system were drawn from the lowest strata of British society and were totally unfitted to undertake the responsibilities and labour required of them in the colonies. The legacy of Hortonian experiments, together with allegations from within Britain and the colonies that Britain was merely shovelling out paupers and emptying the workhouses, ensured that negative perceptions gained currency.

Elliot was under considerable pressure to defend selection practices. He insisted that he always applied the strictest selection criteria and gave priority to colonial preferences. These assurances, however, did nothing to allay colonial suspicions surrounding the government system. Censure continued to emanate from Australia until colonial authorities took over supervision of their own immigration scheme following the introduction of self-government in the 1850s. Notwithstanding some championship of the system from contemporaries and more recent commentators, derogatory images of state-aided emigrants during the 1830s and 1840s predominate. So was criticism of the government scheme, and more specifically of Elliot and his department, justified? Did Elliot allow, or perhaps even encourage, parishes to take advantage of assisted emigration to rid

themselves of their indigent poor? Was Elliot in effect administering a system that merely ‘shovelled out paupers’?

Perceptions of the ‘quality’ of government emigrants have stimulated a rich debate in Australian historiography. In 1915, Mills went against the prevailing negative theme and suggested that on the whole emigration to New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land between 1829 and 1842 was not pauper emigration. While he confirmed that there was evidence to support the view that some selected emigrants were habitual paupers, he argued that such cases were the exception and not the rule.¹ Yet twenty years later, Madgwick concluded that Australia’s government-assisted immigrants were largely degenerate paupers and misfits. He echoed the contemporary opinion that many of the arrivals were ‘far from ideal types’ and argued that those assisted emigrants who travelled to Australia lacked initiative and independence of mind, and were inferior to those who chose North America as their destination.²

More recent research³ has challenged this view and reflects recent revisionist trends in migration history, which have used quantitative and qualitative sources to discover the socio-economic and demographic origins of emigrants. The work of these historians has included resources which were not available to Madgwick, in particular the annual statistical returns of colonial immigration agents, shipping lists, emigrant letters and diaries. Considerable research has been carried out on the character, literacy, age, and former occupations of the emigrants. Haines supported the conclusions of earlier investigations undertaken by

¹ Mills, *Colonization*, p. 183.

² Madgwick, *Immigration*, pp. 249-50.

³ See for example Robin F. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*; R.J. Shultz, ‘Immigration into New South Wales and the Port Phillip District’; G. Howells, ‘Emigrants and Emigrators’; A.J. Hammerton, ‘“Without Natural Protectors”’, pp. 539-66.

Shultz and Crowley and showed that the majority of government-assisted arrivals 'possessed in abundance the rural and domestic skills and trades required by colonial authorities and employers'.⁴ Rather than indigent misfits, Haines concluded that most government-assisted emigrants to Australia between 1831 and 1860 appear to have been 'well-informed, self-selecting, literate individuals with initiative who shrewdly took advantage of...official agencies'.⁵

Yet, negative interpretations persist.⁶ In 1994, Butlin's posthumously published work even suggested that government-assisted emigration might have been used as a means of ridding Britain of convicts.⁷ He speculated that the distinction between convict and assisted migration became 'shadowy' during the nineteenth century and that perhaps a significant proportion of assisted immigration had been a form of 'proto-transportation', thus finding 'an even cheaper solution to some of its [Britain's] criminal problem'.⁸ These interpretations reveal that despite considerable research, there remains significant controversy surrounding the quality of nineteenth-century government emigrants. By examining Elliot's activities and attitude in relation to the selection process, it is hoped to shed more light on the type of emigrant the imperial government-assisted to the Antipodes.

Colonial suspicions about the calibre and character of government assisted emigrants had persisted since the inception of assisted emigration to Australia in

⁴ Robin Haines, 'The Idle and the Drunken Won't Do There: Poverty, the New Poor Law and Nineteenth-Century Government-assisted Emigration to Australia from the United Kingdom', *Australian Historical Studies*, 108 (1997), pp. 1-21.

⁵ Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, p. 6.

⁶ G. Blainey, *A Shorter History of Australia* (Melbourne, 1994), pp.52-3; N.G. Butlin, *Forming a Colonial Economy: Australia 1810-1850* (Melbourne, 1994).

⁷ Butlin, *Colonial Economy*, p. 18.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

1831. From the very beginning, there were fears that colonial society would be inundated with Britain's destitute. Governor Arthur and those in colony with whom he had consulted objected to paupers being sent to the colony. Arthur had reasoned that 'those who have been paupers in England will be paupers in Van Diemen's Land and that only the worst characters would either be selected to be sent...or would consent to go'.⁹ More often than not these fears proved to be groundless. In 1831 the Emigration Committee of Van Diemen's Land was particularly concerned that parish authorities would take the opportunity to send out habitual paupers.¹⁰ The following year, however, the committee reported their satisfaction with the arrangements and confirmed the immigrants' suitability.¹¹ There were certainly some instances, however, of pauper immigrants.¹² But Mills argued that these incidences were 'the exception and not the rule'.¹³ The Secretary of State himself, acknowledged that because of the considerable latitude given to shipowners at that time,¹⁴ the emigrants were not always of the class required in the colonies.¹⁵ Just one month before Elliot took up his post as Agent-General, the surgeon of the *William Metcalfe*, a government emigrant ship bound for Van Diemen's Land, reported that,

The idle, the troublesome, the dissipated and the infirm, are mustered from all quarters by parochial authorities, happy to be rid of such

⁹ Howick memorandum re.Col. Arthur's Dispatch on Land Granting and Emigration, 3 Dec. 1831, Grey papers, GRE 144/1/2.

¹⁰ Arthur to Goderich, 9 July 1831, No 42 enclosing Report of Emigration Committee, CO 280/29.

¹¹ Arthur to Goderich, 31 July 1832, CO 280/34.

¹² For example, the Bristol Guardians of the Poor shipped 76 paupers to Van Diemen's Land in 1832.

¹³ Mills, *Colonization*, p. 183.

¹⁴ The government was keen to encourage shipowners to extend the passenger service, as this would result in increased competition and lower fares – essential for government emigration schemes.

¹⁵ Stanley to Bourke, 26 July 1833, CO 202/30.

characters on any terms....Many of them boasted that they were bribed by the parishes to avail themselves of the opportunity to emigrate.¹⁶

Such accounts and practices were not easily forgotten. Elliot was acutely aware of apprehensions in the colonies about the quality of immigrants arriving.¹⁷ Not only would colonists would expect value for money, but they would have the highest expectation regarding the calibre of immigrants and Elliot recognized the need to demonstrate that the selection process would reflect colonial needs and preferences. These considerations were explicit in the printed information which was circulated for prospective applicants.¹⁸

Issues surrounding the quality of emigrants covered areas such as age, occupations, place of origin, religion, literacy and morality. Prospective employers did not favour large families with numerous small children. Their preference was for young married couples who were either agricultural workers or mechanics¹⁹ from rural areas. Employers complained that the assisted immigrants were not the 'sober and industrious' workers they sought and described some as 'the very refuse of the counties'.²⁰ Unmarried women immigrants provided another area of concern. There were frequent claims that the majority of single females were morally degenerate and that many were prostitutes. Colonists from all levels of society did not tire in stressing their need for a 'moral and industrious population'.²¹ Furthermore, they were deeply suspicious of large numbers of Irish

¹⁶ Report of Surgeon James Evans, 17 March 1837, CO 280/78.

¹⁷ Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1847, CO 384/42.

¹⁸ See for example Government Emigration Office printed pamphlet 'Nature and Conditions of Assistance by Government to Emigrants to New South Wales', 27 July 1838, CO 384/47.

¹⁹ A general term used to describe manual labourers working in a trade.

²⁰ Cited in C.M.H. Clark (ed.), *Select Documents in Australian History 1788-1850*, pp. 194-5.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Catholics arriving on their shore.²² It was generally felt that the government system was failing the colony and that the bounty system was providing the more superior immigrant. Colonial despatches and reports during the 1830s and 1840s revealed the extent of the dissatisfaction with the system which Elliot superintended.

James Denham Pinnock

Elliot's severest and most vocal critic between 1838 and 1841 was James Denham Pinnock, Colonial Emigration Agent in Sydney. Elliot and Pinnock were former colleagues and knew one another's work very well. There is also evidence that they moved in the same social circles.²³ In evaluating the validity of Pinnock's charges, therefore, specific aspects of their professional relationship and responsibilities must be examined. Between 1831 to 1834, Pinnock was a temporary clerk attached to the Colonial Office and, like Elliot, cooperated with the London Emigration Committee.²⁴ In January 1835 Pinnock was appointed as Emigration Agent to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. He was based in London, and also held an 'informal' appointment as liaison officer between the

²² Colonists felt that in many instances the 'class' of Irish who landed in Australia were not suitable settlers and generally were unable to gain employment. Roman Catholic families tended to be large and included young children – such families were frowned on by employers. See Pinnock to Gipps, 1 March 1840, *Historical Records of Victoria*, pp.272.

²³ Pinnock to Otway, 16 March 1835, CO 385/9. This letter includes a reference to Thackeray whom Pinnock describes as his friend. Elliot and his wife were close friends of Thackeray.

²⁴ See article on James Denham Pinnock (1810?-1875), in D. Pike (gen. ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 2 (London and Melbourne, 1966), pp. 333-4.

Colonial Office and the Poor Law authorities.²⁵

The nature and status of his position in the Colonial Office remains vague. Although appointed by the Secretary of State,²⁶ Pinnock does not appear to have ever been a permanent employee.²⁷ More significantly, it is evident that Pinnock was dissatisfied with the contractual arrangements of his Colonial Office post. In 1836, he wrote to Under-Secretary, Sir George Grey requesting that he be put

On some permanent footing...with a view to my being granted such a remuneration for my Services, as Lord Glenelg may consider a zealous & faithful discharge of the numerous responsible duties entrusted to me – may deserve.²⁸

These duties were so extensive, Pinnock pointed out, that he had been compelled to engage assistance, the cost of which he had paid himself.²⁹ He reminded Grey that the only ‘emolument’ which he received was a ‘small salary’ from New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land and that he received no payment from Britain.³⁰ Prior to this, Pinnock had approached the Poor Law Commissioners asking them to provide a testimonial to support his forthcoming request for a salary from the

²⁵ Hay to Treasury, 17 Jan. 1835, Treasury to Hay 29 Jan. and 10 Feb. 1835, CO 384/39; Pinnock to Grey, 20 Mar. 1836, CO 385/9; see also Hitchins, *Colonial Land*, p.19. In Pinnock to Bourke, 30 Apr. 1835, CO 385/9, Pinnock described his duties as ‘to superintend the selection of the Emigrants ...to the Australian Colonies with the assistance of the Govt. Loan or Bounty’; in Pinnock to Grey, 2 Mar. 1836, CO 385/9 his duties are outlined as being the ‘Govt Agent, resident in London, for the purpose of directing Emigⁿ...to the Colonies, by affording facilities & information to Parish Authorities & Landed Proprietors desirous of furthering the Emigration of Labourers and others from their respective Districts’. See also *Historical Records of Victoria*, p. 256.

²⁶ Pinnock to Bourke, *ibid*.

²⁷ Pinnock is not included on the Colonial Office establishment lists for this period, nor is he included in J.C. Sainty (comp.), *Office-Holders in Modern Britain, VI, Colonial Office Officials* (London, 1976).

²⁸ Pinnock to George Grey, 2 Mar. 1836, CO 385/9.

²⁹ This was not an isolated incident. The emigration officers often used their own private funds for official expenses. Some privately employed clerks to help them with their workload. Emigration Minute 29 Aug. 1842, CO 384/73.

³⁰ Pinnock to Grey, 2 Mar. 1836, CO 385/9. Pinnock’s salary was £200, paid equally by New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land.

Colonial Office.³¹ He asked for a statement ‘as to the value of my Services to your Department; and at the same time to solicit your good offices in my favour’.³² Pinnock remained on the same footing until the end of that year. Then, in January 1837, Glenelg decided that a regular full time agent was required in London. This resulted in the appointment of Lieutenant James S. Lean as Government Emigration Agent in London in February 1837.³³

Pinnock was now without a position. This was certainly a severe disappointment to him, especially taking into account his previous emigration experience. A further blow followed two months later when Elliot returned from Canada and was appointed Agent-General for Emigration. While Elliot was in Canada, Pinnock had been using the title of ‘Government Agent General’ of the ‘Emigration Department, Colonial Office’, as well as ‘His Majesty’s Agent-General for Emigration’.³⁴ Pinnock undoubtedly had high expectations of being offered the post.³⁵ With no position available to him in England, he was moved to Sydney as Colonial Agent for Immigration.³⁶ At first sight, Pinnock’s transfer appears to have been on the recommendation of Glenelg.³⁷ But there is also evidence to suggest that Elliot was influential in the decision and ‘promptly transferred Pinnock to Sydney’.³⁸ From this period, Pinnock’s relationship with the Colonial Office and

³¹ Haines, *Emigration*, p. 86 mistakenly interpreted this letter as a request to the Poor Law Commissioners for an increase in salary. The request for the increase in salary was directed to the Secretary of State’s permanent under secretary, Sir George Grey, see above.

³² Pinnock to Poor Law Commissioners, 22 Dec. 1835, CO 385/9.

³³ Stephen to Treasury, 10 Jan 1837, CO 384/45.

³⁴ Printed notice, CO 384/87; Emigration poster, ML D356/17. See also Hitchins, *CLEC*, p. 19

³⁵ See Pinnock’s private papers, including notes by Madden.

³⁶ Stephen to Spearman, 10 Jan. 1838, CO 385/17; Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 127; see also Pinnock’s private papers.

³⁷ Stephen to Spearman, 10 Jan. 1838, CO 385/17; Glenelg to Gipps “Private”, 14 Dec. 1837, H.R.A. ser. I, xix, p.205, quoted in Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 127, fn. 1.

³⁸ *Historical Records of Victoria*, p. 256.

particularly with Elliot, deteriorated.³⁹ Following his arrival in New South Wales, Pinnock took every opportunity to criticize Elliot, the Colonial Office and the government system of emigration.

Evidently Pinnock's own work in London had been deemed to have been unsatisfactory. The Australian colonies had complained about the quality of immigrants arriving under Pinnock's superintendence.⁴⁰ Criticism also emanated from the Colonial Office. Stephen described Pinnock as being of 'light and unstable character'.⁴¹ Yet unpublished notes by historian Madden which are held with Pinnock's papers suggest that Pinnock's work in connection with Canadian emigration during the 1830s had been 'excellent'.⁴² Although describing Pinnock as a 'self-publicist', Haines' examination of recruitment practices and strategies in rural areas during the 1830s shows Pinnock's approach to have been effective and concluded that 'Pinnock's...operations, in tandem with Elliot's experience since 1831, constitute the foundations on which future systematic selection and recruitment of all assisted emigration was built'.⁴³ Clearly, assessment of Pinnock's work by both contemporaries and historians is inconsistent. The standard of Pinnock's administration need not be examined here. What is important for this discussion, is that unquestionably Pinnock felt aggrieved at his treatment by the Colonial Office. Moreover, Elliot's role in Pinnock's transfer to New South Wales generated tension between the former colleagues. These are

³⁹ Correspondence between Pinnock and Elliot immediately prior to Pinnock sailing for Australia was rather terse. See for example Elliot to Pinnock 23 Jan. 1838 and 1 Mar. 1838, CO 386/21.

⁴⁰ *Historical Records of Victoria*, p. 256.

⁴¹ Stephen minute, 19 Jan. 1841, CO 384/63.

⁴² Madden notes, n.d.1951, Pinnock papers.

⁴³ Haines, *Emigration*, p. 85.

crucial factors to be considered when assessing Pinnock's complaints about the calibre of emigrants being sent to New South Wales by Elliot and his department.

There is no doubt that Pinnock, as Emigration Agent in Sydney, was in the ideal situation for judging the quality of the immigrants. His duties included reporting on:

The name, age, native places, Religion, Education and trade of each Individual...as well as the appearance of the Emigrants as to bodily health and strength, cleanliness and deportment, and the probability or otherwise of their becoming useful colonists.⁴⁴

Pinnock examined the immigrants and supervised their disembarkation and reception at the immigration barracks. He also retained the testimonials and references presented by immigrants on their arrival.⁴⁵

As well as having the responsibility to assess the immigrants, Pinnock was in a very favourable position to influence public opinion in New South Wales. He compiled half-yearly and annual reports on both the government and bounty immigration. These reports were the main source of information for colonial authorities and colonists. Pinnock's influence did not end there. He was also one of the chief witnesses before the various colonial immigration committees, whose reports, it has been argued, were always 'coloured by his evidence'.⁴⁶

Pinnock's first report to the colonial secretary in February 1839 extolled the virtues of the bounty system but was severely critical of the government

⁴⁴ Thomson to Pinnock, 21 Aug 1838. Papers on Immigration. Original Instructions to Emigration Agent, State Archives of New South Wales, ML 4/4705, p. 10.

⁴⁵ The Colonial Immigration Board had previously examined these.

⁴⁶ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 161.

scheme. One of his main complaints was directed at the high proportion of government-assisted children when compared to those introduced under the bounty system. He reported a ratio of one child to three adults on the bounty ships, but found the ratio on the government ships 'about equal'. He drew attention to what he considered to be the ineligibility of many of the government immigrants, and made particular reference to those from Ireland. He alleged that several were 'perfectly disabled by infirmity' and that others were 'clearly ineligible, from their vocation'. Throughout his report he repeatedly referred to the errors of Elliot and his selecting officers in sending out so many persons who in his view were totally unsuited to the requirements of the colony.⁴⁷

Elliot responded to all the points raised by Pinnock. Regarding the issue of infirm and disabled emigrants, he acknowledged that in the case of the emigrant ship *Calcutta*, which had sailed from Ireland, selection had taken place before any permanent selecting officer had been appointed for that area. He stressed, however, that he could find no grounds to substantiate the accusation concerning the physical condition of the emigrants. Elliot also pointed out that occasionally some people over 50 years of age were allowed to go if they were relatives of desirable families, but such emigrants paid their own passage and therefore were not government-assisted. Pinnock himself unwittingly provided Elliot with material to refute charges of immigrants' ineligibility. In his report, Pinnock informed Governor Gipps that 'all the immigrants who arrived during the past year...are now comfortably settled, and at high wages throughout the colony'.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Report on Emigration 10 March 1840, CO 384/ 58, p.10.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Elliot, not one to let an opportunity slip by, declared that he could find no more fitting answer than this to allegations of the unfitness of emigrants.⁴⁹

Elliot also challenged the accuracy of statistics in connection with the ratio of children to adults in both systems. He reported that Parliamentary returns for the year 1838 revealed the proportion of children on the bounty ships was almost the same – 29 per cent and that on the government ships, 30 per cent. Elliot also took the opportunity to make his well-used observation that young couples without children were less likely to emigrate than those with children. He emphasized that selectors would obtain eligible young couples without children when they could, but when they could not, they would ‘make the best arrangements instead which they find in their power’.⁵⁰

Pinnock’s criticism of the government system and of Elliot in particular continued throughout his period as Emigration Agent in Sydney. In contrast, his praise of the bounty system and the quality of immigrants it produced was fulsome - particularly those immigrants introduced into the Colony by Marshall, the principal bounty agent for New South Wales. The relationship between Pinnock and Marshall can be viewed with suspicion.⁵¹ Elliot and his fellow commissioners of the CLEC, were well aware that while in England Pinnock had been ‘closely connected’ with Marshall, who enjoyed ‘the virtual monopoly of the Bounty Emigration’. They accused Pinnock of writing his New South Wales immigration reports only after consultation with Marshall’s agent. The board

⁴⁹ Report on Emigration 10 March 1840, CO 384/ 58, pp. 17-20.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ For an account of the relationship between Pinnock and Marshall and charges of collusion between them which led to Pinnock’s dismissal as Emigration Agent in 1841 see Madgwick, *Immigration*, pp. 160-3 and also Pinnock’s private papers (not catalogued).

described Pinnock's evidence as being 'at variance' with that of other witnesses and argued that he had 'officially produced statements inconsistent with facts'. Pinnock was also accused of being 'a warm partisan of the principal importer [Marshall] of people on bounty, and to act rather like his Agent, than a paid and responsible servant of the public'.⁵² Pinnock's position became untenable and he was replaced as Emigration Agent in July 1841.⁵³

Although no evidence emerged to show that Pinnock profited financially from the preference he showed to bounty immigrants and from his collaboration with Marshall, it has been suggested that enough is known to 'discredit his most severe allegations against the "Government System"'.⁵⁴ With regard to Pinnock's charges concerning the quality of the government emigrants compared to that of the bounty immigrants, Shultz argued that they seemed 'baseless, as far as it can be tested'.⁵⁵ He concluded that the government emigrants were more skilled than the bounty emigrants and were a more diversified group.⁵⁶ Shultz went on to suggest that it was possible that the government immigrants were the 'most important acquisition to the colony in the long term'.⁵⁷

Despite the circumstances surrounding Pinnock's fall from grace, it has been argued that Elliot's public reports defending his department's activities were 'not impressive'. Madgwick argued that it was easy to regard such

⁵² CLEC to Stephen, 18 Jan 1841, CO 384/63; see also copy in Mitchell Library, ML A1284, pp. 195-213.

⁵³ Pinnock became Deputy-Registrar of the Supreme Court in Melbourne until 1851. 1857-60 he served as immigration agent in Melbourne. Family papers belonging to Pinnock's descendants indicate that he was eventually granted compensation for the loss of his post in 1841, but that this money was never fully paid.

⁵⁴ Shultz, *Assisted Immigrants*, p. 16.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

correspondence as a 'cloak for an entirely different policy' and therefore it was impossible to be certain where the truth lay.⁵⁸ This is always a problem when using official correspondence written for a public audience. A more authentic insight into Elliot's attitude towards the selection process is revealed when other, more confidential, sources are taken into account. Three key areas of evidence warrant examination. First, official (but unpublished) correspondence between Elliot (or on behalf of Elliot) and other public servants is crucial. Second, as much of the criticism concerned emigrants aided by parishes, correspondence between Elliot's department and Poor Law officials needs to be considered. Third, communications between Elliot and gentry and aristocratic landlords are useful in assessing the validity of allegations that landowners, assisted by Elliot, merely used assisted emigration as a convenient means of clearing their estates of redundant labour in order to relieve their financial, paternalistic burdens, with little regard for colonial needs.

Adherence to selection criteria

Although Elliot professed publicly that government assistance was always granted with regard to colonial preferences, private correspondence reveals that other considerations were taken into account. One of Elliot's first major tasks as Agent-General had been to consider and report upon the distress in the Western Isles and Highlands of Scotland. In 1838, in a paper offering a brief sketch of the

⁵⁸ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 148.

nature and extent of Elliot's duties drawn up for Thomas Spring Rice,⁵⁹ he acknowledged that the system of assisted emigration was not for the benefit of the Australian colonies alone. He revealed that 'the Mother Country...has also it's [sic] own direct and immediate share in the benefit'. Elliot illustrated this point by indicating that recently, much of his department's time had been devoted to relieving the distress in the Highlands of Scotland.⁶⁰

On examination of correspondence with Stephen, it becomes evident that Elliot felt it necessary on occasion to be flexible in his interpretation of regulations. The case of the emigrant ship *Augusta Bessie* is one such example. This vessel was the first emigrant ship to sail under Elliot's superintendence. He admitted that he had deviated from the regulations recommended by the colonial authorities and had selected some emigrants who were 5 years beyond the age limit. The reason put forward for doing so was to ensure valuable settlers were not 'lost' to the colony. But Elliot did stress that such deviations should be used cautiously in the future.⁶¹

Instructions to new selecting surgeons made it very clear that every attempt should be made to select emigrants of 'good character, and industrious & respectable habits'.⁶² Surgeons were to ensure that they obtained information regarding emigrants' suitability for assisted passages from religious ministers or former employees. In addition, Elliot stressed that it was essential to avoid people

⁵⁹ Thomas Spring-Rice, later first Baron Monteagle of Brandon in Kerry (1790-1866). Secretary of State to the Colonies 5 June-17 Nov. 1834. Elliot was a close friend of the Spring-Rice family.

⁶⁰ Memorandum on the Department of Agent General for Emigration, 29 January 1838, Monteagle papers, 13400/II/9. Although government-assisted emigration was used to relieve the distress in the Highlands, evidence suggests that generally Elliot did abide by selection criteria recommended by the colonies. This is discussed in more detail below.

⁶¹ Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42.

⁶² Elliot to New Surgeon, 3 July 1837, CO 384/42.

who were intemperate as ‘the temptations to that vice are much greater in New South Wales, from the climate & the cheapness of ardent spirits’.⁶³

Elliot never tired of repeating that while he endeavoured to send those emigrants most suited to colonial requirements, he could only select the best available. The fluctuating nature of the British economy and the fickleness of potential emigrants frequently resulted in a scarcity of individuals willing to travel to the other side of the world. The stigma attached to Australia’s penal connections were also significant. Many people were reluctant to make the Australian colonies their home, while convicts were still being transported there. Another difficulty was inextricably linked with the selection criteria itself. The most desirable emigrants were young, healthy, people without dependants. These tended to be the most mobile section of the labouring classes.⁶⁴ But these were also the category of workers most attractive to British employers and were those least likely to be without employment. Therefore during periods of economic upturn, British and colonial employees competed for labour. Reflecting upon the difficulties often encountered in selecting prospective emigrants, Elliot compared the rate of ship departures and ‘recruitment’ for convict ships and emigration ships. The difference was, Elliot noted, that in the case of the convict ships, their passengers were

procured and detained...by the Officers of Justice, we [Elliot’s department] have to catch our own; and are exposed to all the risks of caprice or altered circumstances on their part, and to their leaving us at the last moment.⁶⁵

⁶³ Elliot to New Surgeon, 3 July 1837, CO 384/42.

⁶⁴ E. Richards, ‘How did Poor People Emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the Nineteenth Century?’, *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), pp. 250-79.

⁶⁵ Memorandum on the Department of Agent General for Emigration, 29 Jan. 1838, Monteaule papers, 13400/II/9.

At times, therefore, Elliot had very little choice but to relax regulations in order to satisfy the colonial thirst for workers. He was particularly concerned that should insufficient emigrants be selected, the colonies would have to resort to drawing from other pools of labour including Indian Coolies. Elliot strongly opposed the proposal of the immigration of Indian Hill Coolies into the colonies in an attempt to satisfy the shortage of labour in the late 1830s. He expressed his understanding of the predicament New South Wales found itself in, but was apprehensive about the plan and the consequences. He identified two main concerns:

Either the European labour in that country would be depressed to the Standard of the Indian, whose subsistence is estimated ...at one third the other's, - or else (which is the result I should expect to occur) the white man would come to scorn the work done by the black, - the labor (sic) of the country would settle into the hands of an inferior Class, marked by a distinct color (sic), - and instead of the vigor, enterprise & unexampled progress which have hitherto been seen in this Colony, one should have the old and vulgar spectacle of a lazy, proud aristocracy of the Skin, served by a listless race of Helots. A few individuals might make their fortunes faster, but the prospect of National greatness would be gone.⁶⁶

Taking in account Elliot's feelings on this issue, it becomes clear that he would rather demonstrate more flexibility in interpretation of the selection regulations, than witness an invasion into the colonies by coolies which would result in

⁶⁶ Elliot to Mill, 4 Dec. 1837, CO 386/21.

‘introducing Indian Blood into their [the colonies’] population, or Indian habits into their industry’.⁶⁷

The second source for consideration gives an insight into Elliot’s interaction with parish and Poor Law officials. Colonists at all levels of society were suspicious of Elliot’s dealings with the Poor Law commissioners and parochial officers. These connections were well publicised in the colonial press. An incessant cry from the colonies during the 1830s was that the imperial government, through Elliot’s department, was emptying the workhouses at colonial expense.

Elliot’s liaison with the Poor Law commissioners and parishes did not necessarily mean that he showed any preference to prospective migrants put forward by them. The reality was often quite the opposite. In 1839 out of a total of 158 names submitted from the county of Kent to Elliot, only two families were considered eligible. The remainder were rejected because many of the families were large or heads of households did not have appropriate occupational skills.⁶⁸ Elliot informed his officers to let it be known that the approaches to the Poor Law authorities were not to recruit pauper emigrants but to acquire general information about prospective emigrants.⁶⁹ Workhouse were also a convenient ‘gathering’ point for the selection process. Elliot’s letterbooks do indicate that generally he made it clear to parishes and Poor Law officials that only candidates who met the selection criteria would be considered for free passages. Printed information clearly detailed the selection criteria. It was essential that assisted emigrants belonged ‘to the class of Mechanics and Handicraftsmen, or of Agricultural

⁶⁷ Elliot to Stephen, 1 Dec. 1838, CO 386/21

⁶⁸ Elliot to Hodges, 6 Mar 1839, CO 386/22. See also Haines, ‘The Idle and the Drunken’, p.18.

⁶⁹ Elliot to New Surgeon, 3 July 1837, CO 384/42.

Labourers'. Heads of families had to 'be capable of labour, and Emigrate with the intention of working for wages after their arrival'. The workers most in demand included shepherds, farm servants, building tradesmen, country blacksmiths and 'a moderate number' of tailors and shoemakers. Single men and women were rejected and the most sought after candidates were married couples under the age of 30 years and who had no children.⁷⁰ Elliot retained reservations about the high priority given to young married couples without children. He did not tire in repeating that in his experience these people were the least willing to emigrate. He informed Stephen

it appears that persons...unburthened with children will not quit their country, even for an advantageous change, and that persons who are burthened, will;...the only resource, therefore, for persons selecting emigrants, is to obtain eligible young couples, without children, when they can; but when they cannot, to make the best arrangements...which they find in their power.⁷¹

Among those who were more than willing to emigrate were the Irish. But these were largely regarded as undesirable by colonists. This general unpopularity of Irish Catholics apparently was well known to Elliot, and the CLEC. However, Richards and Oxley observed that although the biases against the Irish and particularly Catholics were recognized and taken into account by bounty shippers and the CLEC, the prejudices were not explicit in selection regulations.⁷²

Despite the difficulties Elliot encountered filling emigrant ships, he frequently

⁷⁰ Government Emigration Office printed pamphlet 'Nature and Conditions', 27 July, 1838, CO 384/47.

⁷¹ Elliot to Stephen, 17 Jan. 1840, CO 384/58.

⁷² Deborah Oxley and Eric Richards, 'Convict women and assisted female immigrants compared, 1841 – a turning point?', in Eric Richards (ed.), *Visible Women. Female Immigrants in Colonial Australia* (Canberra, 1995), pp. 1-58 at p. 24.

rejected applicants put forward by parishes who did not meet the eligibility criteria, and rebuked those that put forward applicants for selection who were clearly unsuitable.⁷³ Ironically, although Elliot was often accused of aiding the parishes to reduce their rates by assisting inmates of the workhouses,⁷⁴ the Poor Law Commissioners observed that

the same causes which make those who are dependent on the poor-rates listless in seeking employment at home, render them unwilling to undergo the temporary privations and inconvenience which must attend their settlement in another country. Those persons are generally most forward to emigrate who are least corrupted by the abuses of the system of relief.⁷⁵

Testimony of a Mr Stuart who gave evidence on behalf of parishes in Norfolk and Suffolk observed that local farmers had complained that ‘emigration only carries off the industrious and well-behaved, and leaves them [parishes] encumbered with the idle and profligate’.⁷⁶ This supported Chuk’s observation that the habitual paupers and workhouse residents were not considered eligible for emigration.⁷⁷

Independent applicants applying to Elliot’s office were firmly rejected if they did not meet the criteria.⁷⁸ And Elliot impressed upon Tufnell that it should be broadcast that emigrants ‘must be of good character – they must be of the kinds stated in my printed notice’. Letters such as that to John Broxholm, Clerk of the Union at Colne, in which Elliot refused the proposed emigrants on the ground that

⁷³ See, for example, Elliot to Hodges, 6 March 1839, CO 386/22.

⁷⁴ It was illegal for Poor Law guardians to give assistance for emigration to those who were receiving indoor relief.

⁷⁵ *Report of Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 354

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Chuk, *The Somerset Years*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ See for example, Elliot to Dawson, 4 Dec. 1837; Walpole to Wood, 18 Aug. 1837, CO 386/21.

the ‘ages of the Parties you mention would place them beyond the description eligible for a free passage’ is typical of the correspondence from Elliot’s office to the parishes.⁷⁹ However, he also intimated that the selecting surgeon was able to exercise his discretion with regard to age.⁸⁰ This tended to be the most usual area for flexibility. Jack Camm’s study of assisted emigration from Pytchley in Northamptonshire revealed that several heads of household who secured free passages were over regulation age.⁸¹

Elliot expressed particular caution over the selection of children. Colonial authorities and employers did not look favourably on emigrants encumbered with young children⁸² and childhood diseases and ailments spread very rapidly on ships.⁸³ During 1838 and 1839 Elliot sent recruitment details and criteria directly to Poor Law Guardians of parishes throughout the United Kingdom. He advised Guardians to submit names, but in consideration of colonial requirements and preferences, to reject large families with children. Elliot drew particular attention to the very young. Elliot urged Tufnell to

inculcate on everyone that we shall strongly object to families of Children below two or three years of age. I had rather have the parents as old as 45, if their children are strong and growing up, than puny Infants, which do us no credit, and are apt to die on the journey.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Elliot to Broxholme, 6 Dec. 1837, CO 386/21.

⁸⁰ Elliot to Tufnell, 9 Dec. 1837, CO 386/21.

⁸¹ J. Camm, ‘Emigration on the Parish’, pp. 29-36.

⁸² See for example details of immigrants who could not obtain employment in Sydney due to their large families. *Historical Records of Victoria*, p. 290.

⁸³ Two children were counted as one berth, therefore, a high number of children would mean increased ‘overcrowding’.

⁸⁴ Elliot to Tufnell, 22 May 1838, CO 386/194; similar sentiments are reinforced in Elliot to Tufnell, 30 May 1838, CO 386/194.

Despite Elliot's declarations that applications from families with children, particularly infants, should be refused, on close examination it becomes clear that these criteria did not reflect his own partiality. He himself had very different personal views about the merit of young emigrants. Elliot looked to the long term developments of the colonies and believed that children would have a more permanently beneficial effect, providing a valuable source of labour in the future.⁸⁵ This may well explain the reason Elliot included in the eligibility criteria that married couples up to the age of 50 'provided they be still hale and capable of work, will, if they have growing up sons and daughters, and *none less than seven years of age*, be deemed preferable to any couples which have Children *younger than seven years*'.⁸⁶

At times there was a noticeable apathy about assisted emigration, both from local families and from parish authorities. Dr Inches, selecting surgeon, observed so in 1839. Very few families had put themselves forward to be considered for selection, and the majority of those who had were not eligible. After 'a fortnight's travelling' he had only 63 families listed as eligible. He informed Elliot that neither the local gentry nor the board of guardians had attended meetings 'to give encouragement to the service by their presence, as usual'. One clerk of the union had actually objected to Inches examining applicants at the workhouse. Inches offered a number of possible reasons to Elliot for the unfavourable reception he had received. Firstly, he cited the droughts which Australia was experiencing that year and had resulted in high prices for food provisions. Secondly, he suggested

⁸⁵ Elliot to Glenelg, 28 Apr. 1838, CO 384/46; Elliot to Stephen 1 Dec. 1838, CO 386/21.

⁸⁶ Government Emigration Office printed pamphlet 'Nature and Conditions', 27 July, 1838, CO 384/47. See also Elliot to Glenelg, 28 Apr. 1838, CO 384/46.

that the 'active advertising' of new associations which promoted other colonies and countries, including South Australia, New Zealand and Texas. Inches concluded his report with a reference to Pinnock's immigration report. Inches believed that 'to exact a combination of requisites for duly qualified emigrants...cannot be looked to for being realized, or accomplished by any one who sees and becomes practically conversant with the condition and state of feeling of the working people'.⁸⁷ Two years later circumstances were very different.

1841 proved to be an exceptional year in the history of British emigration to Australia. By the end of the 1830s, New South Wales was desperately in need of more workers. Pastoral expansion, together with the approaching cessation of transportation in the colony, gave even greater urgency to the situation. An increase in the number of assisted passages on offer brought a response that doubled the outward movement to Australia, which had stagnated since 1839.⁸⁸ Land sales were unprecedentedly high. The funds were used to finance emigration and 1841 witnessed the largest influx of immigrants before the goldrushes, with 23,200 immigrants arriving in New South Wales (including Port Phillip).⁸⁹ Elliot spoke of it as 'the great Emigration of 1841'.⁹⁰ Rather predictably, the colonists expressed increased concern about the characteristics and quality of the immigrants of that year. Francis Merewether, the newly-appointed Immigration Agent in Sydney, who succeeded Pinnock following his removal from office, claimed that

⁸⁷ Inches to Elliot, 18 Oct. 1839, 'Report of the Agent-General for Emigration 1839', Enclosure No. 8, *B.P.P.* 1840 (113) XXXIII, p. 13.

⁸⁸ This was after an initial rise in 1838 in the wake of the Canadian rebellion.

⁸⁹ John McDonald and Eric Richards, 'The Great Emigration of 1841: Recruitment for New South Wales in British Emigration fields', *Population Studies*, 51 (1997), pp. 337-55.

⁹⁰ Report of Agent-General, 'Papers Relative to Emigration', *B.P.P.* 1847-8 (986) XLVII, p.457.

the recruiting agents had sat in their counting houses in London, waiting for the urban poor to come flocking to them for passages to New South Wales. This he suggested was much easier than taking the ‘trouble and expense of seeking a better description of labourers from the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk’.⁹¹

Twenty thousand state-assisted immigrants landed in Australia that year. Given this number, perhaps it is not surprising that there was an unfavourable response to their arrival. The influx and concentration of such a number of immigrants would undoubtedly be seen as disconcerting and even threatening. Certainly Elliot himself believed the emigration of 1841 was ‘decidedly overdone’⁹² and had negatively influenced the perception of the immigrants. The previous year Elliot had been accused by the *Sydney Herald* of having lent ‘himself for parties who wish to clear their [Irish] estates of their useless inhabitants without reference to their fitness for the colony’⁹³. This accusation was often repeated in the following years. The third key area of evidence, private correspondence between Elliot and landowners, will help to assess the legitimacy of this and similar statements.

On close examination it becomes clear that Elliot was not intimidated or coerced by requests from influential landowners. Replying to a request from the 4th Earl of Clarendon⁹⁴ to provide an assisted passage for two of his tenants, Elliot informed him that the couple he had proposed appeared to be ‘very eligible

⁹¹ Legislative Council, New South Wales, Votes and Proceedings, *Reports on Immigration*, 1842, p.4.

⁹² Report of Agent General, ‘Papers Relative to Emigration’, *B.P.P.* 1847-8 (986) Vol. XLVII, p. 457.

⁹³ *Sydney Herald*, 9 Sept. 1840. The previous year the newspaper had accused Lord Monteagle of clearing his estates at the colony’s expense. *Sydney Herald*, 15 March 1839 cited in O’Mahoney and Thompson, *Poverty to Promise*, p. 24.

⁹⁴ Clarendon was Lord Privy Seal 1839-41; President of the Board of Trade 1846; Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland 1847-52.

Emigrants'.⁹⁵ Elliot was reluctant to commit himself, however, to authorizing their passage without further investigation. He informed Clarendon that they should either present themselves at his office or obtain the necessary forms for completion in the usual manner. While Elliot was willing to be of assistance to Clarendon, he was not willing to compromise his position and authorise their passage merely on the recommendation of an acquaintance, however influential.

This was not an isolated exchange. Further correspondence with Clarendon in 1847, a period of great distress in Ireland due to the continuing famine, reflects Elliot's concern that the colonies, in particular New South Wales, should have no opportunity to complain about the calibre of assisted emigrants. It had come to Elliot's attention that there was an 'expectation' in Ireland of an 'imminent programme' of assisted emigration to New South Wales of which he was keen to 'cure misapprehensions' that there would be indiscriminate emigration.⁹⁶ He pointed out that any revenue from the sale of lands in the colony would be directed to recruiting a supply of a 'few thousand useful labourers'.⁹⁷ He informed Clarendon that the object of the expected emigration was not to relieve the United Kingdom, and that those acting on behalf of the colony, such as himself, must not regard the land revenue as a relief fund, nor recruit exclusively from one particular area of the United Kingdom. He stressed that the emigrants selected would be those that were 'best suited to the real wants of the country [New South Wales]'.⁹⁸ Following reports in the Irish press that the CLEC were undertaking emigration to organize a relief programme for Ireland, the commissioners had

⁹⁵ Elliot to Clarendon, 6 April (n.d.), Clarendon papers, Clar dep Irish, Box 11.

⁹⁶ Elliot to Clarendon, 5 Sept. 1847.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

received letters of application ‘made up in quantities only to be described as “Cargoes”...from Proprietors, Parish-Priests and indeed every class of society’.⁹⁹ Elliot, on behalf of the commissioners wanted Clarendon to try to publicise the reality of the situation – that only ‘eligible’ people would be selected.

Elliot replied in a similar vein to Colonel George Wyndham.¹⁰⁰ Wyndham had established the Petworth Emigration Committee, which was responsible for mediating between the Poor Law Commissioners and the Agent General, and after 1840 the CLEC, with the purpose of subsidizing tenants’ travel to Australia from his estates in Limerick, Clare, Sussex and Devon. Elliot furnished Wyndham with details of future sailings of government ships but wrote that passengers would be selected ‘like any others according to their fitness under the Regulations’.¹⁰¹ Sir John Hobhouse’s request for assisted passages for labourers wanting to emigrate from Nottingham was received favourably, but Rogers, the selecting surgeon, was instructed to ‘facilitate the object of the Applicants provided it can be done without departing from the views communicated to you’.¹⁰²

Not even requests from Elliot’s former chiefs were given undue preference. A family recommended by the Earl of Gosford was refused on account of the parents being older than the selection age limit, and the large number of young children.¹⁰³ The Duke of Richmond was respectfully informed that Mr Byas, for whom he had requested a free passage to Van Diemen’s Land did not ‘fall within the Class of persons...eligible’ for a passage to the Australian colonies. Elliot

⁹⁹ Elliot to Clarendon, 5 Sept 1847.

¹⁰⁰ George Wyndham, later the 4th Earl of Egremont.

¹⁰¹ Elliot to Wyndham, 18 June 1838, Petworth House Archives, PH 1057/MF72.

¹⁰² Walpole to Rogers 18 Aug. 1837, CO 386/21.

¹⁰³ Walpole to Gosford, 8 Feb. 1840, CO 386/24.

enclosed a notice detailing the selection criteria in his reply.¹⁰⁴ O'Mahoney and Thompson in their examination of the emigrants assisted by Lord Monteagle from his Irish estates rejected charges that Monteagle had brought 'improper pressure' to bear on emigration authorities. But more significantly, they cited correspondence between Elliot and Glenelg¹⁰⁵ as evidence that Monteagle was closely following Elliot's guidelines about selection criteria.¹⁰⁶

Other influential landowners were also left in no doubt by Elliot that applicants must meet the selection criteria. David Ricardo was informed that the Emigration Office would be happy to receive any applications from him for assisted passages for families from his neighbourhood providing they were 'eligible'.¹⁰⁷

Paradoxically, while Elliot was rebuked for allegedly ridding Britain of the undesirable elements of society, he and one of his surgeons, Dr. Boyter, were accused of shipping abroad the 'cream' of the Highland working population.¹⁰⁸ Members of the newly-formed Highland relief committees in Edinburgh and Glasgow accused Elliot and Boyter of selecting only the superior labourers, such as 'intelligent shepherds', and leaving only destitute and aged people.¹⁰⁹ Elliot would not change the selection criteria.¹¹⁰ He refused to be intimidated and was adamant that the first priority must be to the colonies, and that relief for the

¹⁰⁴ Elliot to Richmond, 8 Feb. 1838, CO 386/21.

¹⁰⁵ Elliot to Glenelg, 28 Apr. 1838, CO 384/46.

¹⁰⁶ O'Mahoney and Thompson, *Poverty to Promise*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁷ Walpole to Riccardo, 31 Jan. 1840, CO 386/24.

¹⁰⁸ David S. Macmillan, *Scotland and Australia 1788-1850: Emigration, Commerce and Investment* (Oxford, 1967), p. 279. Macmillan gives a detailed account of the beginning of large-scale emigration from Scotland to Australia, including the selection of government-assisted emigrants by Boyter and Elliot: see especially Part II vii, pp. 261-304.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 280.

¹¹⁰ There was some degree of flexibility. Elliot allowed Boyter to accept 'within moderate limits' to allow aged relatives to travel with suitable emigrants providing they the cost of their passage was met by family or friends. (Annual Report of the Agent General for Emigration, 1837, CO 384/46).

Highlands must be secondary.¹¹¹ Macmillan observed that Elliot never yielded to pressure, nor allowed 'indiscriminate' emigration.¹¹² Some of the 'pressure' exerted was particularly attractive. In 1838, £20,000 was offered by the relief committees towards the cost of assisted emigration for those in most need. Elliot informed Stephen that he believed the offer should be rejected.¹¹³ Certainly Elliot's position was not an easy one. On the one hand he was being accused by landlords of inhumanity by not selecting those in most need; on the other hand the Australian colonists were complaining that his officers were ridding Britain of ne'er-do-wells at the colonies' expense.

It appears that the caution exercised by Elliot in the recruitment process was only for emigrants funded by colonial land sales. In 1847 Clarendon asked Elliot to consider a proposal of offering free passages to the Australian colonies or Canada to those who offered information about criminals and turned Crown Witness in Ireland.¹¹⁴ Clarendon's anxiety over the rising crime and more importantly the increasing intimidation of those who offered information about the criminals had prompted him to approach Elliot with this suggestion. Clarendon proposed that instead of offering money, he should offer a free passage for one of the colonies, a piece of land, and a moderate amount of capital to stock the farm. He believed that these measures would 'afford security to the individual at once and gratify the ruling passion of the Irish which is possession of land'.¹¹⁵ It was Clarendon's intention that his scheme would be financed from the money which

¹¹¹ Elliot to Stephen, 20 June 1837, CO 384/47.

¹¹² Macmillan, *Scotland*, p. 281. In the hope of securing a free passage for crofters, some landlords had destroyed dwellings to try and prevent the return of crofters who had travelled to Boyter's meetings.

¹¹³ Elliot to Stephen, 2 Feb. 1838, CO 384/46. See also Macmillan, *Scotland*, p. 281.

¹¹⁴ Clarendon to Elliot, 3 Nov 1847, Clarendon papers, Clar dep Irish Letterbook 1.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* See also Clarendon to Grey, 29 Oct 1847, *ibid.*

was allotted to rewards; 'instead of giving £100 or £150 for the conviction of a murderer, apply that sum to paying for the passage of [and] the land'.¹¹⁶ Clarendon requested Elliot to 'smooth his way' as much as possible, and in doing so Elliot would 'thereby not alone do me a great service but the cause of justice and order in this wretched country'.¹¹⁷

Elliot responded favourably to Clarendon's request. Initially he ruled out Australia because of the high cost of passage and land compared to that in Canada. In a postscript however, Elliot suggested offering an immediate passage to Australia 'with a modest pecuniary reward payable on arrival' and providing opportunities to travel to other colonies in the Spring.¹¹⁸ Evidently Elliot was willing to approve the selection of Irish informers as assisted emigrants without inquiring too closely into their personal circumstances. The difference of course was that the home government would be funding the passages. These 'assisted' emigrants were not being financed by colonial land sales and therefore Elliot apparently did not feel bound to apply the selection criteria.¹¹⁹

So strictly did Elliot and his colleagues adhere to the selection criteria that on occasions seemingly eligible applicants could be rejected, because of specific circumstances. Some prospective emigrants, whom apparently met other selection criteria, were refused assisted passages because they lived too far from the port of

¹¹⁶ Clarendon to Elliot 3 Nov. 1847, *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Elliot to Clarendon, 8 Nov. 1847, *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ A similar arrangement operated in England for Chartist crown witnesses. Following a trial of Chartists in Ashton-under-Lyne in 1848, prosecution witnesses and their families, were given free passages to Australia. Both the Colonial Office and the Home Office received complaints from New South Wales about the emigrants' gross misconduct and riotous behaviour and Governor Fitzroy requested reimbursement from Britain for their fares. He objected to the immigration fund being used for such a purpose without the consent of the colony. Fitzroy despatch no. 257, 19 Dec. 1849, CO 714/115. See also R. Challinor, *A Radical Lawyer in Victorian England: W.P. Roberts and the Struggle for Workers' Rights* (London, 1990), pp.167-8.

embarkation, or because there was no recruitment taking place in their locality.¹²⁰ This arrangement was largely governed by the cost of mobility and the amount available at a particular time from the colonial land fund and to some extent Elliot's hands were tied over this.¹²¹ Another case was that of Frances Mary Gleeson, a soldier's daughter born in Corfu. The problem arose due to confusion over the date of her birth. The girl was described by a Governor of the Freemason's Female Orphan School on behalf of his fellow governors as 'well reared, a very amiable person, & capable of being a Nursery Governess'.¹²² Gleeson was keen to emigrate to Port Adelaide, but following six weeks consideration her application was turned down as it could not be determined whether or not she was 18 years of age. Despite Gleeson's attributes and recommendation from the Reverend Warty and 'many others' the CLEC would not authorize her free passage.¹²³

But on occasions Elliot and his department did demonstrate some flexibility and allowed free passages to those whom they felt would be 'useful and desirable Settlers'.¹²⁴ The Clerk of Colne Union was informed that the people he had recommended were ineligible for a free passage as they did not meet the age criteria. However, Elliot did not reject the families out of hand. He advised the Clerk that the selecting surgeon might 'upon personal examination be disposed to admit them as an exception'.¹²⁵ It is difficult to identify specifically the criteria by which Elliot and his staff exercised this variable approach. But it seems more than

¹²⁰ See for example, Elliot to Whittell, 11 March 1839, CO 386/22.

¹²¹ This is discussed in Chapter 2.

¹²² Wright to Connellon, 14 July, 1849, Clarendon papers, Clar dep Irish, Box 11.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ See for example, Walpole to Wood, 18 Aug. 1837, CO 386/21.

¹²⁵ Elliot to Broxholm, 6 Dec. 1837, CO 386/21.

likely that whichever criteria was relaxed, was done so sparingly, and usually when the emigration office was struggling to fill a particular ship.

Elliot's 'flexibility' did not however extend as far manipulating people into actions which would ensure an assisted passage, as evidently happened in the case of recruitment by the South Australia Commissioners. The South Australia Act of 1834,¹²⁶ which was strongly influenced by Wakefield, ordained that emigrants must be between 18 and 24 years of age – young married couples without children were considered ideal. In 1836 the South Australian Commissioners hosted a dinner on board the emigrant ship *Coromandel* immediately prior to its departure for Adelaide. A newspaper account of the social event reported that the emigrants had been selected with 'great attention to character and qualification' and drew particular attention to a couple who both applied at the office of the commissioners on the same day 'to join the adventurers'. They were unknown to each other, and they were told their being single was

an insuperable bar to their wish being complied with; but that, if they chose, they had the means of immediate qualification. The hint was taken; "they looked and liked" and in twenty-four hours were "twain" and, as a married couple, were received on board.¹²⁷

There is no evidence to suggest Elliot or his department ever played the role of marriage broker during emigrant recruitment.

Scrutiny of the annual reports of the Agent-General for Emigration and the CLEC, letterbooks, colonial correspondence, and Elliot's private correspondence

¹²⁶ 4 and 5 Will. IV, c. 95.

¹²⁷ Unidentified newspaper report 'The South Australian Company', n.d. 1836, Wilmot Horton papers, D3155/WH3048/90.

does not support the view that he and his department failed to recruit suitable emigrants to satisfy the colonies' need for labour. Contrary to accusations from the colonies that the workhouses were being emptied at colonial expense, the evidence indicates that parishes were clearly warned by Elliot about the type of individual they put forward for assisted passages. Howells' research concluded that Poor-Law Guardians frequently rejected applicants for parish aid if they failed to comply with the strict eligibility criteria for government selection demanded by Elliot and the CLEC on behalf of the colonies. This supported research by Haines, who disagreed with Carrothers' suggestion that workhouses used assisted emigration to 'rid themselves of their most troublesome charges'.¹²⁸ Haines argued that parishes would only aid their deserving poor.¹²⁹

The issue of 'quality': other factors considered

Why then was the condemnation from the colonies so persistent and vehement? Perhaps one reason was the growing tension between the imperial and colonial authorities over colonial demands for self-government. This resentment created clashes between the imperial government officials and colonial representatives. Tensions such as these could so easily have generated much of the criticism directed at government-assisted emigrants. Madgwick argued that to a significant extent, colonial grievances about the calibre of immigrants arriving in Australia were an expression of the strain between colonial and imperial relations.¹³⁰ Hitchens questioned 'was it not a principle against which they were

¹²⁸ Carrothers, *Emigration from the British Isles*, p. 85.

¹²⁹ Haines, 'Indigent Misfits', p. 239.

¹³⁰ Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 129.

protesting, rather than the actual practice?’¹³¹ The colonies supplied the money for government emigration; perhaps it was not unreasonable that they should have the right to control it.¹³²

Pinnock’s criticism of the government system received particular attention and helped to sustain the image assisted emigrants as the dregs of society. Colonial sensitivity to the penal origins of the colonies, and the contemporary debates about the continuance of transportation are other aspects which must be taken into account. Colonial employers, legislators and moral improvers were influential parties who sought emigrants of high calibre and high moral fibre in an attempt to overcome the predominant perception of Australia as a country of convicts and moral degenerates.

Yet two equally important points must also be considered. Did Elliot really comprehend the type of immigrant the colonies preferred? Did the colonists themselves appreciate the categories and skills of workers that were best suited to the dynamic colonial economy of the mid-nineteenth century? Elliot never visited Australia. He had no first hand experience of the social, economic, and physical conditions of these distant colonies. He relied on information enclosed in despatches, reports and private correspondence. But such channels of communications were not the most reliable method of transmitting precisely the circumstances prevailing in each colony. As a civil servant in London, Elliot would have found it difficult to comprehend the nature of settler society in a country with such diverse and distinct physical geographical, and climatic characteristics. Such

¹³¹ Hitchins, *Colonial Land*, p. 310.

¹³² R.J.Shultz, ‘Immigration Into Eastern Australia 1788-1851’, *Historical Studies*, vol.14, no. 54, 1970, pp. 273-82.

features exacerbated the existing difficulties of Australia during its development from a military-dominated penal colony to a society which embraced 'free' settlers. Elliot's judgement about the calibre of emigrants he selected would no doubt be strongly influenced by his knowledge of the British employment landscape. While undertaking recruiting activities in Gloucestershire during June 1837, Elliot advised Stephen that emigrants from this county would probably be mostly weavers, but, he added optimistically that they were 'accustomed...to work in the field upon occasions, and [were] capable of turning their hands to any labour'.¹³³ It is doubtful if colonial employers would have received these immigrants so confidently.

The dynamics of colonial development resulted in changing economic and social circumstances. The skills and type of labour required by colonists fluctuated. Individual colonies at different times sought a diverse range of qualities in their immigrants as 'preferred occupations changed from time to time, depending on each colony's agricultural and industrial development'.¹³⁴ In 1851, despite years of complaints from the colonies about the alleged number of the indigent poor who were assisted to Australia, a request for paupers to be sent out to Victoria and New South Wales was received.¹³⁵ This petition from the colonies demonstrated how colonial preferences remained fluid in order to accommodate modified circumstances. The emigration service was not often in a position to respond to such challenges.

The problem of distance aggravated these difficulties. The time taken for

¹³³ Elliot to Stephen, 24 June 1837, CO 384/42.

¹³⁴ Haines, 'The Idle and the Drunken', p. 7.

¹³⁵ Elliot to Governors of New South Wales and Victoria, 17 Dec. 1851, CO 201/443, quoted in Cell, *The Colonial Office*, p.82.

correspondence from the colonies enclosing specific requests or information about migration to reach London could be several months. By the time Elliot and his department were able to respond appropriately, the needs of the colonies could well have altered. As Pike observed, there were occasions when slow communications and the ‘cumbersome bulk of empire made the [Colonial] department slow to respond to quickly circumstances in homeland and colonies’.¹³⁶ Elliot’s operations were very much governed by ‘seasons’, with emigrant ships usually leaving Britain during the late Spring and Summer. Economic factors also regulated the amount that was raised in land sales to fund emigration from Britain.

It was essentially a question of supply and demand. The demand for immigrants emanating from the colonies, was largely checked by supply conditions in Britain. Elliot stressed that the emigration fund was not for the relief of distress, but for supplying the Australian colonies with ‘useful Labourers’. He reasoned that these circumstances resulted in ‘a limit in the kind of people we can take. It is moreover a fund of moderate amount, and hence arises a further limit in the number who can be accepted, even of those who are in other respects eligible’.¹³⁷ Certainly Elliot was in a difficult situation. But it is clear that a significant number of prospective emigrants failed to meet the recruitment criteria and were rejected. This demonstrates a commitment on the part of Elliot and his department to adhere to selection regulations governed by colonial needs wherever possible.

But there were elements of the emigration process over which Elliot and his officers had little effective control – deception and corruption. There were many attempts to evade, overcome or manipulate selection regulations. It was

¹³⁶ Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, p. 35.

¹³⁷ Elliot to Stephen, 20 June 1838, CO 383/47.

impossible for Elliot and his officers to guarantee eligibility status when prospective emigrants and their sponsors colluded to conceal their true situation and character. Such deception has been described as ‘part of the unwritten history of Australian immigration’.¹³⁸ The culprits employed an extensive range of stratagems including changing appearance to disguise gender or age, obtaining references by fraud or bribery. Paradoxically, deception was also used to conceal qualifications which would result in immigrants being over-qualified for work in the colonies. As Oxley and Richards observed, Australia sometimes ‘received better human capital than it bargained for’.¹³⁹ It was not uncommon for governesses to claim to be domestic servants or farm labourers to obtain assisted passages. Such qualified females were felt by colonists to be unsuitable for the general domestic or farm work. It was reported that a party of Irish dressmakers had been advised to describe themselves as labourers and farm servants to obtain an assisted passage.¹⁴⁰ This ‘imposture’¹⁴¹ was difficult to eradicate, although correspondence does indicate that where it was discovered the penalty was harsh.¹⁴²

Elliot expended much time and energy defending selection policy. Recruitment, however, was only one element in the complex process of state-aided emigration. Elliot’s obligations did not end when the emigrants sailed from port.

¹³⁸ Richards, ‘How did the Poor Emigrate’, p. 267.

¹³⁹ Oxley and Richards, ‘Female immigrants compared’, p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ Report on Immigration for 1841 (1842), New South Wales, Legislative Council, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁴¹ A contemporary phrase which was used to indicate a wide range of deceptions.

¹⁴² See for example Elliot to Robinson, 7 March 1841, CO 384/195. If the emigrant had arrived in Australia, he/she was usually returned to Britain by the next available ship. In some cases the guilty parties were given prison sentences.

His responsibilities extended to the health and safety of emigrants during their passage. Scrutiny of this aspect of Elliot's work will not only give a deeper understanding of the nature of his duties, but also reveal the degree of innovation he introduced to government administration.

Chapter 4

Health, safety and welfare of emigrants

In 1838 Lord Durham accused Elliot of exercising 'no effective supervision over the arrangements for the passage of emigrants'.¹ The following year in his report on the affairs of British North America, Durham launched a scathing attack on the existing conditions and 'defective arrangements' for the passage of emigrants across the Atlantic. The necessity of a quarantine establishment,² he argued, showed beyond doubt that 'either our very system of emigration is most defective, or that it is very badly administered'.³ By implication the blame was laid at Elliot's door. Referring to Elliot's report on emigration in 1838, he dismissed Elliot's contentions that although great defects had existed formerly, the present arrangements were 'no longer objectionable'.⁴ While admitting that the superintendence of the Passenger Acts was a considerable improvement upon former practices, Durham asserted that there was still great room for further improvement.⁵ Although the *Durham Report* was primarily concerned with North America, Durham left little doubt that his observations concerned emigration and colonization in general and Elliot in particular. In November 1839, Elliot was again under attack. This time it was the

¹ *The report and despatches of the Earl of Durham* (London, 1839), pp. 404-5.

² Quarantine stations were established at the main ports of entry for British North America and Australia. If there had been sickness on board during the passage or if it was still present, emigrants would have to spend up to two weeks in quarantine.

³ *Report and despatches of the Earl of Durham*, pp. 404-5.

⁴ Report of Agent General for Emigration, *BPP*, 1837-8 (388) Vol. XL, p. 17.

⁵ *Report and despatches of the Earl of Durham*, pp. 404-5.

Colonial Gazette, the mouthpiece of the colonial reformers,⁶ which delivered a lengthy diatribe on Elliot and his emigration report for 1838. It drew heavily on Durham's criticism of the administration of emigration and particularly the arrangements for the passage of emigrants. Elliot's emigration report was disparaged for offering no indication of having accepted or acted on Durham's recommendations for improving the 'unhealthy mid passage', and for its lack of content. The writer sarcastically assured readers that they would not be 'fatigued' by reading Elliot's report as it consisted of only 'four and a half printed pages, and might have been written by any Colonial Office clerk in less than two hours'. The *Colonial Gazette* concluded that it was a 'miserably valueless production'.⁷

What had prompted these criticisms of Elliot, and were they warranted? Is there evidence to suggest that Elliot and his corps of emigration officers were complacent about the conditions that prevailed on emigrant ships and the protection of emigrants? Certainly Elliot rejected any such implications both in official reports⁸ and in his private papers. Reflecting upon his career prior to his retirement in 1868, he was well satisfied with his achievements regarding passenger protection. Elliot recalled how

it fell to my lot to frame and to pass to the satisfaction of the House of Commons as sole Witness before a Committee upstairs, the earlier

⁶ The *Colonial Gazette* was a weekly paper founded in December 1838 as a vehicle for colonial news and was linked with the London Colonial Society (LCS). It was also used as a cover for Durhamite political purposes. From August 1839 it was published at the *Spectator* office. This followed disagreements between Wakefield and the LCS, which had refused to let him use the publication for political purposes. For the next four years, Wakefield used the *Colonial Gazette* to promote his theories and disseminate propaganda concerning systematic colonization. For a more detailed account of the relationship between the *Colonial Gazette* and the colonial reformers see U. MacDonnell, 'Gibbon Wakefield and Canada Subsequent to the Durham Mission, 1839-42', *Bulletin 49 of the Departments of History and Political and Economic Science in Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario* (Ontario, 1924/25).

⁷ *Colonial Gazette*, 20 Nov. 1839, pp. 817-20.

⁸ See for example, Report of Agent General for Emigration, Accounts and Papers, 1838, *B.P.P.* 1839-40 (113) XXXIII, p. 497.

Passenger Acts which have expanded into a sort of Code on the Conveyance of Passengers, and become the model on which the Laws of Foreign Countries on the same subject are shaped.⁹

Did he bestow on himself more self congratulation than his achievements in passenger protection warranted?

The Durham Report

There is little doubt that in 1838 emigrants to North America and Australasia did endure arduous, unhealthy, overcrowded, and unsafe voyages.¹⁰ Elliot himself informed Stephen that some of the emigrant ships 'carried greater numbers than accord with my own views'.¹¹ The *Durham Report* itself contained some powerful evidence. Witnesses severely condemned conditions which prevailed on emigrant ships. Vessels were described as 'quite abominable...so much so, that the harbour-master's boatman had no difficulty, at the distance of gunshot...in distinguishing by the odour alone a crowded emigrant ship'. Evidence referred to the regular 'importation of contagious disease' that had originated on board ship. Durham judged this to be the result of the ships being badly managed, overcrowded and ill-ventilated. The quarantine physician also focused on the contagious character of illness suffered by the emigrants and reported that he found many cases of typhus among the new arrivals. Elliot and his department also came in for criticism on the sea-worthiness of the emigrant

⁹ Memorandum, Nov. 1868, Elliot papers, MS 19421 (224-228).

¹⁰ For details of shipboard conditions on nineteenth century emigrant ships see for example, O. MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth*; A. Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard diaries by nineteenth century British emigrants* (Manchester, 1994); Richard Garrett, *The Search for Prosperity: Emigration from Britain 1815-1930* (London, 1973); Basil Greenhill (ed.) *The Great Migration: Crossing the Atlantic under Sail* (London, 1968); Helen R. Woolcock, *Rights of Passage: Emigration to Australia in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1986).

¹¹ Elliot to Stephen, 12 Dec. 1837, CO 386/20.

ships, and the medical provision on board. It was claimed that many of the 'surgeons' were unlicensed students, apprentices or 'apothecaries shopmen...without sufficient knowledge to be of service to the emigrants'. Medical superintendents were accused of being 'lamentably deficient'.¹² The quarantine physician declared overcrowding was very common and stressed that it arose due to the 'want of inspection at home'. In the light of such evidence, Durham condemned emigrant protection as shamefully mismanaged and neglected.¹³ Writing to Glenelg in October 1838, Durham demanded an immediate reform of the system in the United Kingdom. He argued that 'all the old evils of filth, inadequate accommodation, inferior and insufficient food' which the Passenger Acts were supposed to have remedied and which Elliot believed had been removed 'flourished still like weeds'.¹⁴

In some respects, Durham's attack on Elliot and his supervision of emigration and the protection of emigrants could have been expected. His advisers on his Canadian mission were none other than Wakefield and Buller. It has been suggested that in general terms the Report worked towards 'pre-ordained Wakefieldian conclusions' and was an opportunity to settle old scores with the Colonial Office. The evidence was also considered unfair.¹⁵ As so often happened in commissions of inquiry, questions were undoubtedly framed to stimulate desired responses. Although most witnesses¹⁶ testified to improvements in recent years, these responses were obscured in the report.

¹² It was reported that a surgeon had diagnosed three passengers as having broken arms, as he had found the tibia and fibula of each was fractured. The quarantine physician found the emigrants to be suffering from only sprains and informed the surgeon that the tibia and fibula were bones of the leg.

¹³ MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 130-1.

¹⁴ *Report and Dispatches of the Earl Durham*, pp. 404-5.

¹⁵ MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 131-2.

¹⁶ *Report and Dispatches of the Earl of Durham*, pp. 404-5; Elliot to Stephen, 5 Jan. 1839, CO 384/52.

MacDonagh has defended Elliot against the tendentious nature of the Durham Report. He pointed out that Elliot's remarks were taken out of context and presented as 'foolish and absolute opinions'.¹⁷ He criticised the report because Durham laid all the evils of emigration at the door of Elliot and his corps of officers and that no allowance was made for the misfortunes which were due to poverty of many of the emigrants; the dangers of long passages in enclosed and confined surroundings; nor to the ineffectual legislation.¹⁸ A significant weakness in Durham's argument was that some evidence referred to the period before Elliot had taken up his appointment as Agent-General in 1837. One witness referred to the mortality rate and fatal diseases which occurred at the quarantine station at Grosse Isle in 1834. Another gave evidence to confirm the overcrowding of the ships but observed that 'such instances have not occurred this season [1838], emigration having almost ceased'.¹⁹ Elliot's first report, to which Durham and the *Colonial Gazette* referred, was concerned with the season 1837-8 and most notably, with emigration to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, which were Elliot's prime responsibility. The *Durham Report*, however, generally referred to the emigration period prior to 1838 and was primarily concerned with emigration to British North America.

Elliot defended himself and his officers vigorously. His response was that those who had given evidence, such as the quarantine physician, had totally misunderstood the nature of the responsibility which had so far been assumed by himself and his officers. He acknowledged that the privations experienced by many emigrants during a specific voyage had been as terrible as the physician had

¹⁷ MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 131-2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-3.

¹⁹ *Report and despatches of Durham*, pp. 177-85.

claimed. He was adamant, however, that neither himself nor his emigration officers were to blame, as the Durham Report had suggested.²⁰ Elliot also argued that much of the evidence concerned issues which were outside the area of his and his officers' responsibility. The evidence regarding ships' surgeons was irrelevant, he contended, as the Passenger Acts did not require surgeons to travel to North America, therefore surgeons did not come within Elliot's jurisdiction.²¹ Similarly, the mustering of passengers was the customs officers' and not the emigration officers' responsibility.²² Elliot and the Commissioners informed parliament that 'the enforcement of this law [the Passenger Act 1828] rests chiefly with the officers of His Majesty's Customs'.²³ Significantly Elliot was not denying that appalling conditions prevailed on emigrant ships; what he was seeking to establish was that the reason for these conditions did not lie with himself or his officers. He made these observations 'in justice to a Body of Officers who exert themselves with diligence and zeal in a Service where their powers are by no means commensurate with their responsibility'.²⁴

This declaration of innocence did not reflect complacency on Elliot's part. Nor did it indicate that Elliot flinched from the challenge of tackling the problems of health and safety and improving provision for passenger travel on emigrant ships. But Elliot knew that it was a huge task. He was well aware of the ineffectiveness of the existing Acts and had been since his earliest dealing with emigration. In response to pressure both from the shipping trade and from free-trade members of parliament, the early Passenger Acts were limited pieces of

²⁰ Lt. Low, emigration officer at Liverpool, was particularly singled out for criticism in the *Durham Report*.

²¹ In contrast, because of the length of the voyage, ships sailing to Australia did require surgeons.

²² Elliot to Stephen, 5 Jan 1839, CO 384/52

²³ Report of Emigration Commissioners, *B.P.P.*, 1831-2, (724), Vol. XXXII, pp. 188-285.

²⁴ Elliot to Stephen, 5 Jan. 1839, CO 384/52.

legislation with very little power – watchdogs without teeth.²⁵ The select committee on emigration chaired by Horton in 1826-7 had actually advocated the repeal of the existing Acts on the grounds that legislative controls resulted in costlier passages which inhibited emigration from the United Kingdom. This problem would be a recurring theme in the future development of passenger legislation and one which Elliot would have to overcome. Following the repeal of the 1822 Act in April 1827,²⁶ sickness and death at sea rose significantly. New legislation was introduced in 1828, but it was an unimaginative and ineffective measure.²⁷ It was to be another seven years before the act was altered. MacDonagh suggested the delay was partly due to growing pressure on government time in parliament, but mostly to the ‘respect and fear of the laissez faire opposition’.²⁸

Elliot was cognizant of this opposition. In his position as secretary to the Emigration Commissioners of 1831-2, he had been sensitive to the need for further legislation in respect of passenger protection but he had also been aware that such legislation would be unlikely to proceed through parliament. He recognized that it would be bitterly contested ‘as well by the advocates of conflicting theories in political economy as by the representatives of opposing interests in commerce’.²⁹ Peter Dunkley argued that Elliot had ‘repeatedly thrown his influence against the department’s growing involvement in emigrant protection’.³⁰ He has clearly misunderstood or misinterpreted Elliot’s realistic

²⁵ For an account of the history of the passenger acts 1800-60 see MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth*.

²⁶ As 7 & 8 Geo. IV, c. 19.

²⁷ For details of the provisions of this act see MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 74-83.

²⁸ MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 77.

²⁹ Elliot memorandum, 17 Feb. 1832, CO 42/239.

³⁰ Dunkley, ‘Emigration and the State’, p. 371.

assessment of the political climate. Elliot was not opposed to improving emigrant protection; merely alive to the practical considerations that such legislation would have little chance of success. Until the latter half of the 1830s, the shipping trade was suffering from the effects of economic depression. Shipping and shipbuilding was a substantial element in the British economy. Moreover the industry held a 'recognised position in the political sphere – it was an “interest”'. This interest not only had loyalty from members³¹ who represented constituencies in which the shipping trade was influential, but also from other members who saw themselves as representing shipping.³²

Despite this lobby, a new Bill in 1835 passed with less opposition in parliament than the previous one. However, although it contained a number of improvements, it was still a limited affair. A major weakness of the 1835 Act³³ was the lack of provision for enforcement of penalties. Emigration officers at home and agents in the colonies were both bitterly disappointed with the new Act.³⁴ Elliot was in Canada during 1835, but on taking up his duties as Agent-General, he was alert to the deficiencies of the new legislation.

Elliot and passenger protection

It has been suggested that the Durham Report had administered a healthy jolt to Elliot and his subordinates, because by 1839 Elliot had drifted towards complacency.³⁵ This implied that Elliot, following his appointment as

³¹ Howick came from a constituency which had strong shipping links and he was elected M.P. for Sunderland, an important town for shipbuilding, in 1841.

³² S. Palmer, *Politics, Shipping and the Repeal of the Navigation Laws* (Manchester and New York, 1990), p.3.

³³ 5 & 6 Will. IV, c. 53.

³⁴ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p.90.

³⁵ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, pp.128-35.

Agent General, had made no attempt to tackle the problems of emigrant protection. Evidence however suggests otherwise. Immediately after taking up his appointment, Elliot undertook an extensive fact-finding tour of the British ports where his officers were stationed. This gave him invaluable first hand experience of shipboard conditions for emigrants. An entry in his journal described his passage from Bristol to Cork, aboard the *1st George* [sic] which carried cabin passengers in addition to steerage provision.³⁶ Poor ventilation was a particular problem. During the night Elliot had gone on deck where he found it raining heavily. He recalled, 'on deck there was no shelter, below no air'. He noted that some of the Irish emigrants lay asleep amongst the same straw as the horses rather than remain below deck, and that he was sick with the 'foul air of that Horrid Cabin'.

During this tour Elliot not only took the opportunity to meet his emigration officers but to assess their qualities and characters. His private notes are particularly enlightening. He considered Lt. Henry of Bristol to be 'not quite the kind of man I like best. Very self satisfied'. More importantly he had doubts about his qualities as an emigration officer. Elliot noted that Henry had told him he had found no occasion to impose penalties for delays nor to call for a survey on the quality of ships. Neither had he found it necessary to request additions to provisions for the passengers. 'In short' Elliot wrote, 'he had been...more fortunate than is in the nature of things in this world'. As well as finding him 'priggish' Elliot believed that 'the brokers flattered him' and therefore Henry's inspection was 'small...and much a matter of compliment'.³⁷ This, of course, was

³⁶ This ship was picking up emigrants in Cork.

³⁷ Despite Elliot's initial assessment of Henry, he was one of the officers whom Elliot frequently consulted. Henry was moved to Liverpool in 1840 following the death of the emigration officer Low.

an important issue when trying to enforce or contrive passenger protection. Prior to Elliot's appointment there had been charges of partiality on the part of some officers in their dealing with shipping agents and Elliot would want to avoid any such charges in the future.

In contrast he found the officer in Dublin much more to his liking. He was efficient, having 'statements ready for me in writing'. Although he thought him a little pompous at times, Elliot judged him to be an 'efficient and zealous officer and one who ought to be kept at an active station'.³⁸ Elliot was mindful that he would need to rely on his officers for effective as well as impartial administration of existing and future policy and legislation. This fact-finding tour and the opportunity to meet and assess the worth of members of the emigration corps would be helpful to Elliot in the future. More importantly, he 'saw what really could be enforced, and what could not and how it was desirable that the Law should be worked'.³⁹

During the next three years Elliot was consistently criticised for the conditions which prevailed on emigrant ships. In his final report as Agent-General, he took the opportunity to answer his critics. Acknowledging that there had been 'no want of strictures' upon government emigration, Elliot expressed himself happy to afford some general answers 'in the shape of a few decisive and undeniable facts'.⁴⁰ His first point was that the shipping which had been under his office 'was well spoken of by all'. Elliot's reference to 'under his office' was plainly intended to distance himself and his department from those areas of emigrant protection over which they had no control. Secondly, he made clear that

³⁸ Elliot's journal, Elliot papers, MS 19425 (1-13).

³⁹ Report of the select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, Elliot's evidence, (737) VI, p. 8, Q.44

⁴⁰ Report of Agent General for Emigration, *B.P.P.* 1839-40 (113), XXXIII, p.497.

the care and discipline of emigrants to the Australian colonies was the responsibility of the surgeons of respective ships, and that this arrangement was the result of a proposal from the colonies. He acknowledged that ‘much sickness prevailed’, but he stressed that resulting dissatisfaction from this arrangement could not be attached to his department. It was his opinion that the colonial plan was unsuitable for emigration on a large scale. For that reason, by the end of 1838, Elliot had resolved to take control of the ‘whole system’.⁴¹

The emigrant ship ‘Asia’

Elliot’s report made particular reference to the case of the ship *Asia*. The events and issues surrounding this vessel are particularly worth considering in detail. The *Asia* had sailed from Scotland with emigrants on board. When it put into Plymouth at the end of 1838, there was illness amongst the passengers, the ship was in disrepair, and it was in a state described as one of ‘mutiny’. Elliot had been informed that the passengers had become ‘perfectly unmanageable, and so despondent and dirty that Typhus...had broken out’.⁴² Writing to his sister Emma, Lady Hislop,⁴³ Elliot recalled how he had undertaken to visit the distressed vessel himself ‘having no officer...whom I’d detail for the purpose’.⁴⁴ The Admiralty was making arrangements for repairs to the ship, and an admiralty officer had arranged for the sick to be taken to the naval hospital. But it was Elliot’s responsibility to ‘bring them [the passengers] to rights, for...all his [the

⁴¹ Account and Papers, Colonies, Report of Agent General for Emigration, *B.P.P.* 1840 (5), XXXIII, pp.125-7

⁴² Elliot to Lady Emma Hislop, n.d., Elliot papers, MS 19420 (43); see also Elliot to Stephen, n.d., CO 384/48

⁴³ Lady Hislop was wife of General Sir Thomas Hislop (1764-1843).

⁴⁴ Elliot to Lady Emma Hislop, n.d., Elliot papers, MS 19420 (43)

Admiral's] officers despaired of them'.⁴⁵ Within an hour of boarding the ship, Elliot had assembled the migrants and spoken at length to them. He recalled how he began with 'great censor [sic, i.e. censure], and ended with encouragement'. In an attempt to bring some order to the situation Elliot 'improvised a little code' of regulations, which each adult on the ship signed in his presence.⁴⁶ Orderliness and cleanliness of the ship were the major objectives. There was not, wrote Elliot 'a man on board who does not take his turn, and go on his knees to scrub the decks with a dry stone, every morning'.⁴⁷ Elliot remained in port for a number of days until he was satisfied that arrangements and conditions were acceptable. A copy of the original regulations for the *Asia* is included with Elliot's original letter books, showing some further amendments in what appears to be Elliot's own hand.⁴⁸ These regulations were later adopted by the South Australian Commissioners and by some of the largest private ship companies.⁴⁹ These regulations were later extended to 'all other ships'.⁵⁰ Elliot's endeavours had not been in vain. The *Asia* was the first emigrant ship to arrive in the Australian colonies without loss of life, and as such was a significant landmark in emigration and maritime history.

The next ship which sailed after the *Asia* was the *Navarino*. It sailed from Cork and also completed its voyage without a single death on board, save for a

⁴⁵ Elliot to Lady Emma Hislop, n.d., Elliot papers, MS 19420 (43).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Regulations on board the government emigrant ship *Asia*, 6 Nov. 1838, CO 384/48.

⁴⁹ Instructions addressed by Lord John Russell to the Land and Emigration Commissioners, *B.P.P.* 1840 (35) XXV, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Report from Agent General for Emigration, *B.P.P.* 1839-40 (113), XXXIII, p. 497. A copy of the regulations is included in Appendix 5.

baby who died at birth.⁵¹ Out of the next ten ships which sailed to Australia, five had no deaths; and four had only two deaths. Elliot emphasized that, prior to these regulations, a ship which did not lose as many as ten passengers was considered 'prosperous' and suggested that these were facts which probably 'the warmest advocate would not have ventured to anticipate'. Admittedly, the code of regulations was basic. But it was a base from which to build. Elliot asserted that the improvements were sufficient to show that 'the change is not owing to chance, and that the colony will scarcely have reason to complain of the part this office has taken in the system on board the ships'.⁵² More importantly, the regulations also reveal that Elliot had assumed responsibility for improved passenger protection before the *Durham Report* was published.

Approaches and methods to passenger protection

Elliot's hands-on approach was very much in evidence during his handling of the *Asia* affair. This was another example of the distinctive feature of Elliot's style of administration which was often the result of lack of supporting staff. In 1838 he proposed that provision should be made for an assistant, some copyists and messengers.⁵³ He considered an assistant indispensable if he were to fulfil his duties competently. Elliot emphasised that in addition to the recruitment and selection of emigrants, he was responsible for corresponding with and

⁵¹ Perinatal deaths were not usually regarded as casualties of the passage. Elliot informed selecting officers that women emigrants who were not pregnant were preferable to those who were: Elliot to Stephen, 12 Dec. 1837, CO 386/20. It would, of course, be very difficult for officers to be certain about those women who might have been in the early stages of pregnancy.

⁵² Account and Papers, Emigration, Report of the Agent General for Emigration, 1839, *B.P.P.* 1840 (113) XXXIII. See also Report of the Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, *B.P.P.* 1847 (737) VI, p. 6. Q. 33

⁵³ Memorandum on the Department of Agent General for Emigration, 29 Jan. 1838, Monteagle papers, MS 13,400/11/9.

superintending the corps of emigration officers. It was his duty to give them advice and to investigate complaints made against them. Furthermore he was engaged in collating information from his officers regarding the Passenger Act, so that he could suggest changes. In addition to being 'grossly overworked'⁵⁴ his appointment at this time remained on a temporary footing, which affected the status of his small department and its ability to attract a larger staff. It is clear, however, that these obstacles did not affect Elliot's commitment to his work, or to attempting to improve passenger safety.

His energy and dedication to raising standards was evident from the outset. Three months into his post of Agent-General, he was informed by the London emigration officer, that the British ship *Edward* had put into Portsmouth 'in a leaking state'.⁵⁵ There was reason to suppose that it had sailed in that condition with the knowledge of the owners. Mr White, a passenger of the *Edward* had complained and Elliot had travelled to meet him to discuss his complaint.⁵⁶ Two other passengers confirmed White's statement. Following his meeting with White, Elliot wrote to Lean expressing his concern. He felt the case was 'so important and so urgent, that I must take it upon myself to authorize you to proceed to Portsmouth tomorrow night to enquire into the circumstances. You will...see whether justice appears to be done to them [the passengers], and give them the best advice in your power'.⁵⁷ As Elliot had also had reports from the Admiralty confirming that the *Edward* had left port in an unsound and extremely ill-equipped state, he suggested that Lord Glenelg should consider taking

⁵⁴ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 128.

⁵⁵ Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42.

⁵⁶ Elliot would often travel to the ports at short notice and at all hours of the day if he felt his personal intervention or counsel was needed. See for example, Elliot to Howick, 14 April 1832, Grey papers, 84 (11).

⁵⁷ Elliot to Lean, 6 July 1837, CO 384/42.

proceedings for the recovery of a £1,000 penalty under the Passenger Act of 1835. Elliot was keen to prevent the matter 'from escaping the thorough investigation it would appear to urgently demand'.⁵⁸

Notwithstanding the precautions taken and regulations introduced, there were some occurrences over which Elliot and his officers could exercise little control. During the summer of 1838, Elliot had the unhappy task of writing to the Reverend Thomas Keble⁵⁹ at Bisley, following an outbreak of measles on board the *Layton*. The epidemic had taken hold immediately after her departure and 'raged so destructively amongst the younger class of Children, as to carry off seventy under five years of age'.⁶⁰

The high mortality rate among very young passengers was one of the reasons frequently put forward in the argument against selecting couples with children.⁶¹ Pinnock, in his comparison between the bounty and the government systems of emigration, suggested that sickness was frequently the result of too many children being crowded together.⁶² The private bounty operator, Pinnock pointed out, 'has a strong inducement to exclude them, as far is practicable, and to fill his ship with healthy adults'.⁶³ Furthermore, he stressed that the bounty importer had more reason to secure the health, safety and comfort of his passengers during the voyage. As bounty would be withheld for those who had died or arrived in a state of ill health, it was clearly in the operator's interest to

⁵⁸ Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42.

⁵⁹ Details of the recruitment of emigrants from Bisley for this ship are discussed in Chapter 1. Thomas Keble was younger brother to John Keble, divine and poet.

⁶⁰ Elliot to Keble, 7 July 1838, CO 386/194

⁶¹ See chapter 3 on 'The quality of assisted emigrants'.

⁶² Report of J.D. Pinnock, 28 Feb 1839, CO 384/58

⁶³ Ibid.

'select such only as from their state of health, on embarkation, and previous habits, appear most likely to undergo with safety the privations and hardships of a long sea journey'.⁶⁴ Of course, it was almost impossible to guard against epidemics of childhood illnesses such as measles and chickenpox. Due to the incubation periods involved, children could often appear fit and healthy upon embarkation and the disease would only manifest itself some days into the journey. The scale of the epidemic was due to the close confinement of the children, but contrary to Pinnock's contention, the usual cause was that the disease had been brought aboard by a carrier. Ships' passengers were always at great risk during this period because if infectious diseases were taken aboard vessels they spread rampantly through both passengers and crew. It was inevitable when all were crowded together within the confines of crowded decks. However, the spread of many diseases was facilitated if sanitary conditions on the vessel were neglected or inadequate.⁶⁵ Elliot had identified this problem and his attempt to tackle it was illustrated by his code of regulations for the *Asia*.

The exceptional length of the passage to Australia, of course, brought its own problems. The journey could vary from four to six months depending upon the weather. Obviously the longer passengers were confined on board, the more susceptible they were to outbreaks of disease and infections. In periods of bad weather they were frequently confined below decks for long periods and this tended to exacerbate the problem. Although ships sailing to Australia proved the most vulnerable, similar problems were also experienced on the Atlantic crossing. The superintendent of quarantine for Quebec reported that a cause of increased

⁶⁴ Report of J.D. Pinnock, 28 Feb 1839, CO 384/58

⁶⁵ J. McDonald and R. Shlomowitz, 'Mortality on immigration voyages to Australia in the nineteenth century', *Explorations in Economic History*, 27 (1990), pp. 84-113.

sickness had been the unusual length of the passages of emigrant vessels during the late summer. He considered that in almost every case 'the unprecedented continuance of light westerly winds, which detained vessels for weeks in the gulf and mouth of the St Lawrence'⁶⁶ were to blame.

Typhus was endemic and it was a disease from which many emigrants suffered. It was almost exclusive to the working population, and was spread by the faeces of body lice, thriving in overcrowded conditions. During the nineteenth century it was known by a number of names including ship fever, goal fever, camp fever and Irish fever.⁶⁷ Ports such as Liverpool, where overcrowded lodging houses were prevalent, had particularly high incidences of the disease. If assisted emigrants were not suffering from the disease prior reaching the port of embarkation, they would stand a high chance of contracting following their arrival. Once carried on to the ship, it could spread rapidly, resulting in a high mortality rate among passengers.

Another contagious disease which was taken on board emigrant ships was tuberculosis. During the 1830s and 1840s, tuberculosis overtook typhus and cholera as mass killers.⁶⁸ From the early days of systematic emigration, the medical profession in Britain and the Australian colonies actually promoted the therapeutic effect of the long ocean voyage to Australia for sufferers of tuberculosis. Residence in a warmer climate was also advocated as a cure. Considering the incidence of the disease in the United Kingdom, it is fair to

⁶⁶ Extract of report from Dr. Douglas in Report of CLEC on necessity of amending passenger act, *B.P.P.* 1842, (355) XXV, p. 91.

⁶⁷ Anthony S Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p. 125.

⁶⁸ W.C. Lubenow, *The Politics of Government Growth: Early Victorian Attitudes Towards State Intervention 1833-148*, p. 70.

assume that a significant number of both assisted and unassisted emigrants were unknowingly afflicted with the disease before embarkation.⁶⁹ The confined environment undoubtedly aided the spread of this infectious complaint. There would be very little that emigration officers or Elliot could do to prevent such occurrences.

In considering the effects of these diseases, and the health and welfare of emigrants, it is useful to provide some context. Were assisted emigrants facing greater health and safety risks than workers who remained in Britain? Investigations into social conditions during the nineteenth century produced comprehensive reports which revealed details of the people's health and their living and their working environments. Following the visitations of cholera during the 1830s and 1840s, investigations revealed that urban overcrowding and squalor provided perfect conditions for disease. Urban and rural communities lacked adequate sanitation and fresh drinking water. During the 1830s the workplace was revealed as a source of disease, injury and death. 'England's towns were death traps'.⁷⁰

The call for improved passenger protection coincided with the more interventionist approach for Public Health. Chadwick and Kay-Shuttleworth were particularly influential in alerting the government and the public to the unhealthy living conditions of the working classes. Such efforts to improve social conditions met many obstacles. In addition to technological problems and

⁶⁹ R. Haines, 'Therapeutic Emigration: Some South Australian and Victorian Experiences', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 33 (1992) pp. 76-90.

⁷⁰ Roy Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society in England 1550-1860* (Basingstoke and London, 1987), p. 55

disagreements amongst professionals about the logistics of implementing improvement programmes,⁷¹ funding proved to be a contentious issue.

Finance for passenger protection was an issue over which Elliot had little control. Planning and proposals for improvements in legislation were regularly constrained by costs and the shortage of resources. This was one of the reasons put forward as a defence by Elliot over the increased number of deaths which occurred when the exodus from Ireland was at its peak between 1846 and 1848. Elliot claimed that he could not provide the extra officers to cope with the huge increase in emigration because of lack of funds. This explanation has been strongly rejected. MacDonagh argued that Elliot should have acted 'boldly' and not have let financial restrictions dictate his actions. He claimed that 'all the happenings of 1847...showed that where human lives were at stake...the imperial Treasury ultimately, however reluctantly, met the bill'.⁷² This is a valid point, but of course written with hindsight. Furthermore, MacDonagh has failed to recognize that Elliot had influential close friends within the Treasury, who would have been able to privately advise him on what would and would not be acceptable to department officials. Charles Trevelyan, presumably in response to a request for Elliot for funds for extra provisions for the Irish emigrants, requested Elliot to supply an estimate of requirements. He informed Elliot that the Irish situation was a 'serious evil and I would willingly assist in anything that could properly be done to obviate it'.⁷³ Despite this, sufficient extra funds were not

⁷¹ Norman McCord, *British History 1815-1906* (New York, 1991), p. 178.

⁷² MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 190.

⁷³ Charles Trevelyan, of the Treasury, and who was particularly concerned about the Irish situation, was a close friend of Elliot's. He and Elliot also shared guardianship of a boy. Trevelyan was requesting an estimate from Elliot for the cost of the government supplying barley meal and navy biscuit to supply the emigrant ships. Trevelyan papers, 13/154, see also Trevelyan to Elliot n.d., 15/72. Letters between the two men concerning the need for Elliot's financial restraint regarding office supplies are transcribed in Trevelyan's private journals, see for example, Trevelyan to Elliot, 23 Mar. 1847, Trevelyan papers, 13/139.

forthcoming.

While the evidence presented above goes some way to refuting charges of complacency against Elliot, it is apparent that during the early period of his management of emigration as Agent-General, Elliot's actions were overwhelmingly reactive. Regulations and corrective or palliative actions tended to be ad hoc responses, as in the case of the Asia. To reveal a more comprehensive picture of Elliot's role and influence within passenger protection, other contexts need to be examined and questioned. His approaches to emigrant welfare must be identified. Three key elements deserve attention.

The first is the importance Elliot gave to investigation and statistics gathering as a basis for future passenger legislation. Elliot had recognised the value of this approach during his tenure as secretary to the Emigration Commissioners. He judged the one of most important actions of the commissioners to be 'first, that they for the first time suggested the Collection periodically of Statistical returns from all the Colonies to which Emigrants proceed.'⁷⁴ At the time the CLEC was established, conditions on board emigrant ships were still, in the majority of cases, far from acceptable. Despite Elliot's efforts there had remained a reluctance on the part of government to enforce the laws and regulations.⁷⁵ But Russell instructed the newly appointed Commissioners to take under their consideration improvement of passenger legislation.⁷⁶ Whilst it was during his period with the CLEC that the proposals for

⁷⁴ Report of the Select Committee on Colonization for Ireland. Minutes of Evidence, evidence of Elliot, 1847 (737) VI.I, Q.22. The other important aspect of their work cited by Elliot was 'they were the first to render the valuable service of suggesting a practical Attempt to send Labouring People to Australia'. Ibid.

⁷⁵ Fred. H. Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*, p. 119

⁷⁶ Instructions addressed by Lord John Russell to the Land and Emigration Commissioners, *B.P.P.* 1840 (35) Vol. XXV, p.13.

the new Passenger Act were drawn up and submitted, Elliot and his emigration officers had been collecting information and evidence throughout his time as Agent-General with a view to the revision of the 1835 Act. He had recognized from the early days of his appointment that the emigration corps was best suited to collect and collate information relevant to the improvement of passenger protection.⁷⁷ The valuable assistance he received from his field operators was particularly appreciated. It was with the aid of 'some excellent practical Advice from more than One of the Government Agents stationed...at London and other Ports, [that] a thorough Revision was made of every branch of the Service. The Dietary, the Medicines, the various descriptions of Stores, down to the minutest Detail, were all reconsidered and remodelled'.⁷⁸ He needed to identify the officers who would be the most competent and efficient in providing information. His tour of the ports during the first weeks of his office had been especially useful in meeting and assessing the ability of his emigration officers. He appears to have held Lt. Miller, the officer stationed in Dublin in particularly high esteem.⁷⁹ He established a system of exchanging information between his office and the officers. Furthermore he requested recommendations from them for improvement of passenger legislation.⁸⁰

When faced with technical problems or issues, Elliot frequently asked officers for their advice.⁸¹ As Agent-General, Elliot was unable to secure any major changes in passenger protection. One reason was that his department

⁷⁷ See for example, Elliot memo 24 May 1837 CO 386/19.

⁷⁸ Report of the Select Committee on Colonization for Ireland. Minutes of Evidence, evidence of Elliot, 1847 (737) VI.I, p. 6. Q. 32

⁷⁹ See for example, Elliot to Hodder 21 Nov. 1837, CO 386/20; Elliot to Hodder 30 Nov. 1837, CO 386/21.

⁸⁰ Elliot minute, CO 384/45 22 Nov. 1837.

⁸¹ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 127.

lacked the manpower and financial resources to undertake such a task. Another reason was that while the 1835 Act remained he had insufficient power to effect change. MacDonagh concluded that Elliot accomplished little during his three years of the agency-general. He accepted that Elliot pointed the way to improvement but suggests that 'he did not travel far on any road'.⁸²

The commission of the CLEC at last gave Elliot the opportunity to utilize the information and statistics gathered during the previous three years.⁸³ As senior commissioner, and having the most relevant experience, he took the initiative and the lead in the preparation of the new Bill. Information gathering continued and significantly the commissioners pledged to investigate all breaches of the existing Passenger Act.⁸⁴ Much of the activity involved introducing new types of checks at the ports and on ships.⁸⁵ As more information and evidence was collected, work on the new passenger bill proceeded. The bill was well prepared. So much so that there were very little amendments and it was therefore very much as it had left the CLEC.⁸⁶ Several favourable comments and reports were made about the new legislation. Rather surprisingly, even the *Colonial Gazette* described its general principles as 'excellent'.⁸⁷ MacDonagh cited the new Passenger Act of 1842 as a prime example of 'expert government' and 'for its day a superlative piece of social legislation'.⁸⁸

Elliot was undoubtedly the dominant commissioner. The new legislation owed much to his endeavour. Most of the correspondence, reports and minutes

⁸² MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 128. Macdonagh's attitude to Elliot is rather ambivalent. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

⁸³ Commissions appointing the CLEC, *BPP*, 1840 (113), xxxiii.

⁸⁴ Minutes of CLEC, 20 Jan. – 23 Mar. 1840, CO 384/140.

⁸⁵ See for example Commissioners to Stephen, 11 Jan. 1841, CO 384/68.

⁸⁶ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 153.

⁸⁷ *Colonial Gazette*, 2 Mar. 1842. The Bill was still before Parliament at this time.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.147.

were prepared or written by him. Where his written signature is missing, his distinctive style and phrasing provide endorsement. Following his promotion to Assistant Under-Secretary Elliot retained his influence in passenger regulation as well as other aspects of emigration policy.⁸⁹ As has been observed, he was 'scarcely less important in the field of emigration than he had been as chief commissioner'. This influence was attributed to Elliot's thorough knowledge of the legislation and his legal and constitutional understanding.⁹⁰ These considerations, together with his previous emigration experience and the fact that as Assistant Under-Secretary he would be expected to have sanction over passenger protection policy and legislation, are sound explanations for his continuing influence.

But one further source of influence is noteworthy – his relationship with Thomas Murdoch, who succeeded him as chairman of the CLEC. They had been colleagues⁹¹ for many years and were also close friends.⁹² It is also probable that Elliot was involved in the appointment of his successor, and would have favoured someone predisposed to his methods and opinions. Both the professional and personal relationship between the two civil servants would certainly have had some effect on the nature of the developments of passenger protection, more so in the early period of Murdoch's appointment, when he would be more inclined to seek guidance or information from Elliot.

The second element of Elliot's approach was to ensure the standardization

⁸⁹ See for example Elliot's signature on minutes and endorsement notes in CO 384/82.

⁹⁰ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 193.

⁹¹ Murdoch joined the Colonial Office as junior clerk in 1828 and his career had followed a similar path to Elliot's, including posts as précis writer and senior clerk.

⁹² In addition to being a member of the same societies and clubs, Murdoch was one of the trustees appointed to administer Elliot's second marriage settlement, along with Elliot's brother-in-law and cousin.

and conformity of application of the existing Passengers Act and effective supervision of the corps of emigration officers. Until Elliot's appointment as Agent-General, the duties and authority of the emigration officers lacked definition. Their role has been described as 'vague and tacit'.⁹³ They were without direct leadership, as they had no superior to whom they could report or from whom they could seek guidance. These rather ill-defined arrangements had resulted in random and inconsistent interpretation of existing legislation, which created confusion and on occasions conflict between the corps and shippers. The emigration officer at Liverpool had come under severe censure from the Colonial Office and the Treasury for exceeding his authority and unauthorized spending on prosecutions.⁹⁴ His overt bias in favour of ship owners whom he considered respectable in comparison to those he judged were disreputable caused so much friction between the Colonial Office and the trade that Stephen had to intervene. Low was reprimanded for his lack of impartiality and his actions which were outside the authority of the Act.⁹⁵ Elliot's appointment provided the much needed co-ordination and leadership to the corps, and he endeavoured to ensure that legislation was interpreted precisely and objectively. Under Elliot's direction the emigration officers were a more responsive group of officers. Elliot provided support and guidance when appropriate, but he could also be a demanding task master. There can be little doubt that now the emigration corps had gained a

⁹³ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p.93. MacDonagh also noted that the 1835 Passenger Act ignored their existence and left them without any certain status, *ibid.*, p. 109.

⁹⁴ Treasury to Hay, 14 May 1834, CO 384/36.

⁹⁵ Memorandum 3432 Emigration, 25 Aug. 1834, CO 384/35. For a detailed discussion of the controversy surrounding Low and his work at Liverpool see MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, chapter 5.

‘really powerful and effective superior and passenger legislation an informed and active master’.⁹⁶

The need for uniformity and efficiency also extended to the colonies.

Although the corps of emigration agents stationed at the principal ports were responsible for enforcing most of the provisions of the act, the duty of identifying problems which had occurred during the voyage lay with the agents in the colonies. To establish a more efficient and uniform system of reporting by these agents, the Commissioners designed a form known as a ‘ship’s return’. This form was to be completed by the colonial agent upon the arrival of every emigrant ship and then forwarded to the commissioners in London. In addition to the usual information, it recorded details such as capacity of the passenger decks; the number of adults permitted by the Passenger Act; the number of adults on board and causes of any detention in quarantine. Deaths and births on the voyage were to be recorded and also the total number landing in the colony. There was also room to record remarks concerning the ship, food, health of the passengers, the surgeon and complaints. This detailed bureaucratic procedure bore all the hallmarks of Elliot’s hand. The value of these returns was that they enabled the Commissioners to keep an accurate check of the process of emigration, and supplied them with information necessary to supervise more effectively the working of the existing Passenger Act. More significantly, they supplied the necessary data for the Commissioners to use in recommending revision of the Acts.

⁹⁶ MacDonagh., *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 139. On several occasions, when discussing Elliot’s approach to administration of the passengers act, MacDonagh refers to his legal background and legal education. Elliot had no formal legal training as he left Harrow school at 17 years of age and immediately entered the Colonial Office.

Humanitarian considerations were compelling pressures in the development of policy and legislation for passenger protection, and Elliot was generally responsive to these forces. He declared that whenever problems arose, his officers were despatched to the port to take measures ‘for attending to the rights and interests of the passengers’. He believed that his department might be seen to be ‘in a great measure for the protection of the poor’⁹⁷ and suggested that his emigration officers ‘constitute...in every port, the appointed poor man’s friend’. Every effort was made to give ‘ease and security’ to their passage to the colonies and to secure the emigrant’s safety.⁹⁸ He was also keen to ensure that cases where passengers were exposed to danger or discomfort were dealt with effectively and, if appropriate, severely.⁹⁹ There can be little doubt that the new clause in the 1842 Act, to provide lifeboats, was humanitarian in origin. It was noted that ‘a proper supply of boats may make the most important difference in the saving of human life, where so many people are on board the same ship’.¹⁰⁰

While humanitarianism held considerable sway with Elliot, consideration for the third key element of his approach – free trade and regard for concerns within the shipping trade – influenced Elliot’s methods and criteria for changes in passenger protection. Alert to the apprehension and opposition within the shipping trade and the shipping lobby, he was anxious that legislation should not be so restrictive or prescriptive as to alienate the shipping trade or, more importantly, result in increased passage fares. This was of particular concern for emigration to Australia as fares were so much higher than those to British North America.

⁹⁷ Elliot minute, 8 Nov. 1837, CO 386/19.

⁹⁸ Report of Agent General for Emigration from the UK, 1837, *B.P.P.* 1837-8 (388) XL.1.

⁹⁹ See for example Elliot to Lean, 6 July 1837, CO 384/42; Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42.

¹⁰⁰ General Report of the CLEC, 1842, p.19. The Act provided for two boats for ships of 150 to 250 tons, three boats for ships of 250 to 500 tons and four boats for each ship above 500 tons.

Commenting on earlier passenger legislation which was in place on taking up his appointment, Elliot suggested that regulations had ‘harrassed’ the ship owners, who increased the price of passages ‘and by that Means injured the poor Man, who was kept at home instead of being able to emigrate’.¹⁰¹ One of Elliot’s guiding principles concerning passenger protection, he revealed, was that he ‘inculcated’ on his emigration officers that whilst their first duty was to the emigrants, they must never do anything ‘needlessly, vexatious or harassing to the Trade’.¹⁰²

The 1842 Act appeared to be a satisfactory compromise. New regulations concerning food provision for passengers, for example, were described as the minimum necessary to preserve life and health – more than the prescribed quantity might result in higher fares. Madgwick suggested that ‘no one could have been thoroughly imbued with the notion that fares must be held as low as possible than Elliot’.¹⁰³ Despite this, the trade complained on numerous occasions about the ever-increasing regulations and legislation which they saw as actually ‘injuring the very people for whom you profess so parental a regard...it falls upon the poor emigrant who is thereby compelled to pay a higher price for his passage’.¹⁰⁴

At no time did this seem more crucial than during the Irish famine crisis, when the emigration system and the shipping trade were tested to their limits. By the end of 1846 the Commissioners were considering improvements of the 1842

¹⁰¹ Report of the Select Committee on Colonization for Ireland. Minutes of Evidence, evidence of Elliot, *B.P.P. 1847 (737)* VI.I, p. 7, Q. 38

¹⁰² Report of the Select Committee on Colonization for Ireland. Minutes of Evidence, evidence of Elliot, *B.P.P. 1847 (737)* VI.I, p. 7, Q. 44.

¹⁰³ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁴ Pamphlet entitled *Letter to Lieutenant Low, R.N.,...by a Passage Broker (Liverpool, 1838)*, quoted in MacDonagh, *Ibid*, pp. 111-2.

Act. Elliot was keen to ensure that the Act would be ‘as intelligible as possible to plain Sailors and Government Officers’, as they were the parties who would be closely involved with interpretation and enforcement. The Commissioners were, more importantly, attempting to close loopholes, and address deficiencies of the previous Act and striving to secure ‘legal efficiency’.¹⁰⁵ Stephen and Grey were of the opinion that new legislation would simply put obstacles in the way of those trying to escape the hardships of the famine. But Elliot, despite his concern about too much interference with the trade, felt that new legislation was needed. He acknowledged that new provisions could raise the cost of fares. He admitted that he had always been an advocate for avoiding needless restrictions ‘in order to enable every man who could possibly get away to effect that Object’. But after the ‘calamities’ of 1847, he declared it time to impose new provisions for passenger legislation.¹⁰⁶

The Commissioners were allowed to proceed with a new Bill. But Grey instructed that while no serious abuses were to be ignored, nothing should be put in the way of the exodus from Ireland. Although Elliot would have preferred to have introduced more stringent provisions for passenger protection at this time, he also judged that the sufferings on board the ships would be nothing compared to the misery they would suffer if they did not embark on the journey.¹⁰⁷ The shipboard mortality on the Atlantic crossing during the Irish exodus of 1847 amounted to more than 17,000 out of a total of approximately 100,000.¹⁰⁸ Many of the passengers had died from typhus and dysentery. Elliot defended the

¹⁰⁵ Elliot to Lefevre, 6 April 1846, ML, A1640/167-70.

¹⁰⁶ Elliot’s evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, 9 March 1848, *B.P.P.* (737) VI., Q. 467.

¹⁰⁷ Seventh General Report of the CLEC, 1847, *B.P.P.* 1847 (809) XXXIII.

¹⁰⁸ Elliot’s evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, 9 March 1848, Q.447.

handling of the events of 1847 by claiming circumstances had been exceptional.¹⁰⁹ He remained convinced that it was preferable for Irish emigrants to have been given the opportunity to emigrate rather than face almost certain death at home. The merit of this outlook has been recently underlined. Cormac Ó Gráda and Kevin O'Rourke asserted that although emigration was an inefficient form of famine relief, without it, famine mortality would 'surely have been higher' as more people competed for scarce food supplies.¹¹⁰

Elliot deflected any blame directed at himself or his fellow commissioners. For the 'lamentable sufferings' of 1847, he suggested, lay with the evils of famine – not with the management of emigration. The reasons which induced the victims to go, he declared, were the same which rendered them more liable to illness during the voyage. Health officers had reported emigrants reaching the ports in

a half-starved condition...being without any stamina at all, they at once fell victims of the disease [diarrhoea]. – In other cases the same fever which raged at home broke out in the ships; the people...restless and worn out, abandoned themselves to despair, and the vessels arrived quite floating pest houses.¹¹¹

Elliot stressed that fever broke out on the ships shortly after they had left port, thus revealing that the fever had been carried onto the vessels, and was not due to shipboard conditions.¹¹² He did not tire of asserting that the circumstances of 1847 had been an exceptional.¹¹³ He was sensitive that the existing Act needed

¹⁰⁹ Elliot's evidence, House of Lords select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, 1848. Q.447.

¹¹⁰ Cormac Ó Gráda and Kevin H. O'Rourke, 'Migration as disaster relief: lessons from the Great Irish Famine', *European Review of Economic History*, 1 (1997), pp. 3-25 at p. 16.

¹¹¹ Elliot to Clarendon, 21 Aug. 1847, Clarendon papers, MS Clar. Dep. Irish Letterbook 1.

¹¹² First Report of the Select Committee on Colonisation, Ireland, *B.P.P.* 1847-8 (737)VI, p. 9 Q.50.

¹¹³ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 193.

amending to prevent a reoccurrence of the tragic events, but at the same time such occurrences had to be kept in perspective.¹¹⁴

Whilst he distanced himself from responsibility for the high mortality rate during the emigration of 1847, Elliot was willing, on occasion, to listen to proposals and advice from individuals. Stephen de Vere, nephew of Lord Monteagle, proved a particularly significant commentator. In 1847 De Vere travelled to Quebec in steerage class so ‘that he might speak as a witness respecting the sufferings of emigrants’.¹¹⁵ Elliot suggested that he should provide a full account of the voyage and make proposals for tackling the ‘evils’.¹¹⁶ De Vere graphically described the over-crowded, onboard conditions and exposed all the prevailing deficiencies.¹¹⁷ His letter was extremely influential with the Commissioners. Elliot described it as ‘One of the most important Pieces of evidence upon Emigration’ which he had ever seen.¹¹⁸ MacDonagh noted that sooner or later all but one of De Vere’s proposals were attempted.¹¹⁹ Elliot was keen to progress with improvements based on these suggestions, but he remained sensitive to the possibility of objections from shipping interests. He felt that all the necessary amendments could not be achieved immediately.¹²⁰ The CLEC

¹¹⁴ First Report of the Select Committee on Colonisation, Ireland, *B.P.P.* 1847-8 (415) XVII.

¹¹⁵ Monteagle to Grey, 23 Jan. 1848, Monteagle papers, quoted in MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 194.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*; First Report of the Select Committee on Colonisation, Ireland, *B.P.P.* 1847-8 (415) XVII, p.44, QQ. 459-60. Some historians appear to be unaware that Elliot made this request to De Vere. See for example, Jason King, ‘Stephen De Vere, *Famine Diary*, and Representations of the Famine Irish in Canada’, paper presented at the Scattering Conference, 24 September, 1997, Irish Centre for Migration Studies, National University of Ireland. He stated that De Vere wrote a letter of grievance to Elliot following his Atlantic passage. Elliot and De Vere, who was nephew of Lord Monteagle, were acquainted. Elliot was a close friend of De Vere’s brother Aubrey.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of De Vere’s letter see MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 194-6.

¹¹⁸ First Report of the Select Committee on Colonisation, Ireland, *B.P.P.* 1847-8 (415) XVII, Q.459.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

¹²⁰ First Report of the Select Committee on Colonisation, Ireland, *B.P.P.* 1847-8 (415) XVII.

however, did incorporate a significant number of De Vere's proposals in new passenger legislation in 1847 and 1848.¹²¹

Elliot's concern was not solely with objections from the shipping trade. He was also conscious that 'the public' did not welcome officious and meddling state intervention. During the crisis of the Irish famine, the CLEC rejected proposals that emigration officers should inspect and regulate emigrant lodging at the ports. For Liverpool, it was suggested that central government should provide some accommodation and that the emigration officers should check that emigrants had sufficient clean clothing and bedding for the voyage. These recommendations were firmly rejected by Elliot. In addition to objections regarding cost, and central government providing lodging for emigrants waiting at the ports, there was the apprehension of the possibility of public complaints if officers became involved in such personal issues as bedding, clothing and personal hygiene.¹²²

Technology and science

There remains one further aspect of Elliot's approach to passenger legislation to consider – his interest and understanding in technology and science. Inextricably linked with nineteenth-century scientific research was the application of new technology to industry and commerce. At this time it was not the universities which led the way in research. The greatest contributions were from societies such as the Royal Institution of Great Britain, the Royal Society and the British Association for the Advancement of Science. All of which relied on aristocratic leadership and patronage. Science became fashionable, especially for those within and on the fringe of aristocratic society, such as Elliot. He was

¹²¹ 10 & 11 Vic., c. 103; 11 & 12 Vic., c. 6.

¹²² Commissioners to Stephen, 21 April 1840, CO 384/61.

particularly interested in the work of the chemist Michael Faraday and this drew him to membership of the Royal Institution.¹²³ It was through his partiality for science and technology that Elliot acquired an understanding of technical requirements and innovations applicable to ships' health and safety provisions. Stephen was completely lacking in technical knowledge and he openly admitted this.¹²⁴ The difference between the two men was that Elliot was willing to learn. Much of his knowledge he gained from the more experienced and competent of his officers.¹²⁵

But he sought knowledge from other sources. Entries in his journal for 1844 and 1845 refer to 'Faraday'. At this time the scientist was very much involved with experiments to improve ventilation in coal mines¹²⁶ and as Elliot was himself anxious to improve ventilation on passenger ships, it seems reasonable to assume that his interest in Faraday was related to improving his knowledge on this issue.¹²⁷ By 1848 it is apparent that Elliot's understanding of the technicalities involved in improvement of shipboard conditions had grown considerably. So much so that when proposed new ventilation systems were being considered for emigrant and convict ships, Elliot judged himself more qualified to make the decision of which apparatus would be used than the Admiralty, because he did not think they were 'high authorities on the subject of Ventilation'. He declared he had attended to problem of ventilation 'a great deal'

¹²³ Following his retirement, Elliot served as Vice-President of the Royal Institution.

¹²⁴ Stephen to Gladstone, 16 Mar. 1835, CO 384/35.

¹²⁵ See or example Elliot to Hodder, 21 Nov. 1837, CO 386/20; 30 Nov. 1837, CO 386/21.

¹²⁶ M. Ray, *The Haswell Colliery Explosion 1844: Just another mining disaster?* (B.A. dissertation, University of Durham, 1994); F.A.J.L. James and M. Ray, 'Science in the Pits: Faraday, Lyell and the Home Office enquiry into the explosion at Haswell Colliery, County Durham, in 1844', *History and Technology*, 15 (1999), pp. 213-31.

¹²⁷ Faraday had also undertaken research concerning the prevention of deterioration of corn on convict ships.

and had had several options tested in ships.¹²⁸ Grey deferred to Elliot's scientific knowledge and approved his choice of ventilation apparatus.¹²⁹ This is another notable example of Elliot acquiring 'expertise', as well as reinforcing his enthusiasm for extending, as well as demonstrating his 'knowledge'.

MacDonagh described emigrant protection as a 'comparatively simple and unadulterated subject'. The developments which took place, he argued, were ordinary everyday reactions. Furthermore, he stressed that no 'master-bureaucrat' assisted its development.¹³⁰ While he conceded that the Colonial Office had its eminent Victorians such as Stephen, Taylor, Rogers and Merivale, he concluded that the changes were instigated by the lesser, least distinguished administrators – the 'humdrum executive officers, and career civil servants who never rose above the height of assistant under-secretary'.¹³¹ This is a clear reference to Elliot. Evidence presented in this chapter suggests that Elliot was significantly influential in the changes which were introduced for passenger protection. The question that must be asked now is whether Elliot was merely a career civil servant or was he a 'master-bureaucrat' – a 'statesman in disguise'?

¹²⁸ Endorsement by Elliot on Murdoch to Merivale 17 Jan. 1848, CO 384/82. Elliot also noted that one of the greatest problems with ventilation apparatus was the resulting 'rush of wind' which resulted in emigrants 'trying by all means' to stop the flow and so defeating the object of the system. The increase in the number of deaths during voyages to Australia and British North America during the Irish famine crisis drew particular attention to ventilation systems in an attempt to prevent the spread of contagious diseases such as typhus. The Colonial Office was inundated with plans and blueprints for ventilation apparatus from amateur and professionals. This was not unusual. There were similar responses following coalmine disasters, when the Home Office received large numbers of suggestions for improved ventilation systems for mines.

¹²⁹ Grey to Commissioners, 9 Feb. 1848, CO 384/82.

¹³⁰ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 8.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

Chapter 5

Formulating emigration policy

The debates about the influence that Colonial Office officials were able to exert over policy and administrative practices between 1830 and the 1850s are familiar to scholars of colonial administration. There is general agreement that officials considered capable by the Secretary of State were involved in the planning and direction of colonial policy. The debatable aspect is the degree of influence they exercised within the process. Much of this scholarly discussion has centred round the significance of James Stephen. Contemporary statement and criticism on his perceived authority over colonial affairs have provided compelling evidence for many historians – some of whom, however, found the testimony not entirely convincing. Manning suggested that imperial policies were not ‘fashioned by one man and even less by a bureaucratic London Office’. Wakefield, Buller and other colonial reformers have been identified as being responsible for the ‘legend’ that Stephen and influential permanent officials were the power behind the throne in the Colonial Office between 1830-50.¹ Hall concluded that the influence of permanent officials was not nearly as great as had been supposed.² While he conceded that the Secretary of State did follow the advice of the permanent staff on some colonial issues, he was convinced that the Secretary of State was not a ‘puppet’ manipulated by officials at the Colonial Office.³ Stephen’s centralization of Colonial Office business is a further explanation for his supposed large influence

¹ Helen Taft Manning, ‘Who ran the British Empire - 1830-1850?’, *Journal of British Studies*, v, i, (1965), pp. 88-121.

² H.L. Hall, *The Colonial Office: a history* (London, New York, Toronto, 1937).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

over policy decisions.⁴ Much of the historiography has provided inconsistent opinions and verdicts about Stephen and senior permanent officials, including Elliot. Stephen has been represented as sharing in ‘governing the British overseas empire’,⁵ but his influence has also been judged by the same historian to have been exaggerated.⁶ While Cell concluded that the Colonial Office system was not suited for ‘the making of colonial policy’,⁷ he nevertheless argued that the Colonial Office permanent staff were fully capable of providing the knowledge and intellect for the formation of colonial policy, and cited Elliot, along with Merivale,⁸ as examples of permanent officials whose role was ‘meant and understood to be a large one’.⁹ According to Phillip Buckner, Elliot was virtually performing the duties of an under-secretary and playing an active role in the formulation of policy.¹⁰ Yet MacDonagh did not consider Elliot to be a ‘master bureaucrat’ nor did he place him in the same league as Stephen, Taylor,¹¹ Rogers¹² or Merivale, to whom he accorded at least ‘moderate celebrity’ in terms of colonial administration.¹³ Such statements, therefore, raise the questions: to what extent did Elliot influence

⁴ A.G.L. Shaw, ‘James Stephen and Colonial Policy: The Australian Experience’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 20 (1992), pp. 11-34.

⁵ P. Knaplund, *James Stephen and the British Colonial System*, p. 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷ J.W. Cell, ‘The Colonial Office in the 1850s’, *Historical Studies*, xii (1965), pp. 43-56.

⁸ Herman Merivale (1806-1874). He was appointed permanent Assistant Under-Secretary, along with Elliot in November 1847 following Stephen’s retirement (CO 878/2 no. 39). In May 1848, Merivale was promoted to the post of Permanent Under Secretary, a post that he held until May 1860. See J.C. Sainty, *Office Holders in Modern Britain*, vi, *Colonial Office Officials* (London, 1974), p. 45.

⁹ Cell, *British Colonial Administration in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, p. 24.

¹⁰ Buckner, ‘The Colonial Office and British North America 1801-1850’, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, viii, (Toronto, 1985), p. xxxi.

¹¹ Henry Taylor, although appointed senior clerk in Jan. 1825, less than one year after entering the Colonial Office, never rose above this rank.

¹² Frederic Rogers was Assistant Under Secretary May 1846-Jan. 1847 and was appointed Permanent Under Secretary in May 1860.

¹³ MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth*, p. 327.

policy? Was he representative of a 'closet statesman' portrayed so vividly by Henry Taylor?¹⁴

Before attempting to examine Elliot's influence on colonial policy, there is one problem which needs to be addressed - that of the relationship between 'policy making', 'advising' and 'administrative practice'. The territory between these activities is shadowy. Establishing when an official's advice or actions move into the realms of policy-making can be problematic and perhaps result in introducing false distinctions. Ultimately, all decisions, new regulations, practices and policies had to be officially sanctioned by the Secretary of State, and where appropriate by Parliament. Examination of reports, minutes and correspondence reveals the process and procedures behind ministerial and parliamentary approval. For the purposes of this study, Elliot's influence and power will be assessed in the context of changes, developments, regulations and legislation, which he initiated and which modified either directly or indirectly the administration and management of government-assisted emigration to Australia.

Elliot's earliest opportunity for influencing emigration policy arose during his appointment as secretary to the Emigration Commissioners in 1831. As the administration of the new scheme for assisted emigration was largely in Elliot's hands at this time, he had to make numerous minor policy decisions regarding procedures and regulations for the developing system. Arrangements for aiding the emigration of single women provide good evidence of this aspect of his influence. As funds were getting low for administering the female emigration scheme in 1832, Elliot informed the Duke of Richmond that it had become necessary to revert to the practice of not assisting female emigrants other than by a

¹⁴ H. Taylor, *The Statesman* (London, 1836).

contribution of £8 towards their passage fare. He wrote 'I am very sorry that no more than so limited an aid can be offered...But I trust your Grace will approve of the terms in which I have communicated ...the fact'.¹⁵ This reveals that even before Elliot had taken over sole responsibility for the scheme in August 1832, he was making significant policy decisions while keeping the Commissioners appropriately informed. Some historians have tended to underestimate Elliot's influence following the dismissal of the Commissioners. They appear to have assumed that Elliot returned his Colonial Office duties and was no longer involved with emigration administration.¹⁶ This is probably largely due to the fact that the London Emigration Committee continued to handle the practical arrangements of recruitment on behalf of the Colonial Office until 1836.¹⁷ Despite the involvement of this committee, Elliot was undoubtedly involved with superintendence and matters of policy during the period of experimental schemes for assisted emigration.¹⁸

But it was Elliot's return to the business of emigration in 1837, following his two-year secondment to British North American affairs, that gave him the greatest opportunity to influence colonial administration by his management of assisted emigration. During the next ten years, Elliot was able to mould and direct policy to a considerable degree. His influence was apparent from even the earliest

¹⁵ Elliot to Richmond, 28 April 1832, Goodwood archives, MS 648 f124. In addition to signed correspondence between Elliot and Richmond, there are some unsigned letters to Richmond which are not attributed to Elliot but are identifiable by his distinctive handwriting and content, for example, unsigned to Richmond, 19 Mar. 1831; MS 636 f119; 7 Oct. 1831, MS 636 f72; 4 Feb. 1832 MS 647, f73.

¹⁶ See for example, F. G. Clarke, *The Land of Contrarities: British Attitudes to the Australian Colonies 1828-1855* (Melbourne, 1977), p. 86. Clarke stated 'Between 1832 and 1836 the entire management of the emigration to the Australian colonies was overseen by...the London Emigration Committee, which...controlled the selection and dispatch of emigrants on free passages'. Clarke made no reference to Elliot.

¹⁷ See Chapter 1.

¹⁸ See Chapter 1; also Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 99.

days of his appointment. His handling of the *Asia* affair in 1838,¹⁹ which prompted Elliot to frame a code of regulations - later extended to all other emigrant ships – demonstrated not only his personal ‘hands on’ approach, but also how his everyday management and administration of emigration enabled him to take minor policy decisions which had important implications for subsequent policy and legislation. In the case of the *Asia*, Elliot had originally sought Glenelg’s permission to travel to Plymouth to deal with the situation. He was informed that, ‘Mr Elliot will of course exercise his own discretion respecting his proposed journey to Plymouth, the necessity for which he is much better able to intimate than Lord Glenelg can be’.²⁰ This minute was indicative of the leeway Elliot was allowed in his management of emigration.

Elliot’s most far-reaching contribution to emigration policy stemmed from his concern for government-assisted female emigration. The criticism and problems which had accompanied the early experiments in female emigration during the early 1830s coloured his attitude towards emigration policy. On assuming the role of Agent General, he was determined that future emigration policy would not include schemes for assisting single women *en masse* to the colonies. He was convinced that the most satisfactory way for them to travel was under the protection of family members.²¹ Family emigration was to be Elliot’s standard during his management of emigration. As the numerical imbalance between the sexes gradually began to be addressed, he attempted to maintain stability and provide balance for the future trying to ensure that an equal number of

¹⁹ The circumstances surrounding the *Asia* are discussed in Chapter 4.

²⁰ Minute of Stephen written on Elliot to Stephen, 30 Oct. 1838, CO 284/48

²¹ See for example Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1837, CO 384/ 42 / 1591 Emigration.

males and females were recruited in each ship. He sought to achieve this by, where ever possible, stringent application of selection rules and regulations and he was not adverse to minor policy changes to accommodate his preferences. Passenger lists and returns can reveal the extent of his social engineering. Table 2 below, shows the striking gender balance that was achieved in the ships *Lady Kennaway* and *Westminster* both of which sailed for Australia in February 1838.

Table 2.

Gender breakdown of assisted emigrants in the ships <i>Lady Kennaway</i> and <i>Westminster</i>, February 1838	
<i>Ship: Lady Kennaway</i>	<i>Ship: Westminster</i>
80 adult males	70 adult males
80 adult females	70 adult females
70 boys	51 boys
70 girls	51 girls

Sources: Elliot to Stephen 24 Feb. 1838; Elliot to Stephen 26 Feb. 1838 CO 386/21.

Haines suggested that historians of post-1860s emigration have sometimes underestimated the extent to which their period owed its regulatory structures to policy and systems introduced in the 1830s, and modified in the late 1840s.²² Nowhere is this more apparent than in their oversight of the influence of Elliot's early experiences with the administration of emigration for single women - experiences which shaped the nature of emigration policy until the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Elliot's human engineering also extended to infants. He was aware that very young children frequently did not survive the arduous journey to Australia and

²² R.H. Haines, 'Government-Assisted Emigration from the United Kingdom to Australia, 1831-1860: Promotion, Recruitment, and the Labouring Poor', p. vii.

were susceptible to childhood diseases. He was also sensitive to colonial criticism regarding the difficulties of finding employment for families burdened with very young children. Elliot therefore regularly informed landlords, parishes and the Poor Law Commissioners that his office would not look favourably on infants below the age of three.²³ His later emigration schemes were modelled by such social engineering considered by Elliot as vital for the benefit of the colonies, and the welfare of the emigrants.

Other approaches by Elliot were not so contrived. As circumstances in Britain and the Australian colonies changed, Elliot needed to respond as quickly and effectively as the problems of administering an emigration system for colonies at such distance would allow. Colonial administration was rarely positive; it was usually a reaction to a particular incident, issue or colonial despatch. Responding to a call from the colonies in 1851 for paupers to be sent out to address the labour shortage following the discovery of gold in Victoria and New South Wales, it was Elliot's decision that the request should be refused. He felt strongly that at a time when the colonists were opposed to convicts arriving within their midst, they should not be sent

140,000 people of such chronic idleness, incapacity or bad health, and so esteemed in their own neighbourhoods, that at a time of general prosperity they are unable to gain a livelihood...in order to supply its failing industry and raise the standard of morals at a most critical period in its history.²⁴

Elliot's correspondence and reports reveal that throughout his career, he constantly

²³ See for example, Elliot to Tufnell, 22 May 1838, CO 386/194. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

²⁴ Elliot to Governors of New South Wales and Victoria, 17 Dec. 1851, CO 201/443, quoted in Cell, *The Colonial Office*, p. 82.

had to reassess operations and revise regulations and practices. At times, Elliot felt compelled to deviate from existing policy. His relaxation of the rules during the recruitment for the *Augusta Bessie* and his introduction of new criteria which he felt more appropriate and practicable reveal that it was within Elliot's brief to introduce new regulations.²⁵ His response to the report of the high death toll on the *Lady McNaughton*²⁶ which sailed for New South Wales in 1837 demonstrates that there were occasions where he introduced new regulations spontaneously to remedy existing flaws in the emigration system. In this case he identified defects in the supply of medical supplies and informed Stephen that he was 'at this moment in consideration of the establishment of some general rule on the extent of the Medicine Chest'. Furthermore, in the light of there being only one 'hospital' on board the *Lady McNaughton*, he revised regulations to ensure that no ship would in future sail to Australia without two hospitals on board – one for men and the other for women.²⁷ Elliot felt the need to act again in the case of the *Bussorah Merchant*, many of whose passengers had suffered from smallpox and measles during the journey to Van Diemen's Land in 1838. After consultation with the Navy's Physician General, he introduced instructions that the surgeon would personally inspect prospective emigrants during the selection process in order to establish if they had been vaccinated.²⁸

²⁵ Elliot to Stephen, 10 July 1837, CO 384/42 1409 Emigration.

²⁶ Out of 405 emigrants on board, 14 adults and 53 children died during the voyage or in quarantine.

²⁷ Elliot to Stephen, n.d. March, 1838, 490 Emigration, CO 384/46.

²⁸ If emigrants had not been vaccinated, the surgeon would either carry out the vaccination or decline to take them. To enforce this new regulation, Elliot required the returns from the selecting surgeons to indicate how many people selected had been vaccinated before and after the medical inspection. Elliot to Stephen, 7 June 1838, CO 384/47 1114 Emigration, copies to: Gov. of N.S.W. 20 June 1838; Gov. of V.D.L. 16 June 1838.

But he did not generate new selection procedures and regulations lightly. Elliot's handling of the emigration from Scotland between 1837 and 1839, which brought him into conflict with Scottish landlords, demonstrates that he would not be coerced into policy changes which he felt were to the detriment of the Australian colonies or in conflict with their requirements. During a period when he was under pressure from Stephen for an 'extensive emigration' from the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland to relieve destitution and over-population, he remained firm that he would not relax selection criteria and insisted that emigrants must be suitable for the colonies' needs.²⁹ In January 1838 when the Scottish relief committees offered the British government £20,000 to assist emigration from Scotland, Elliot's advice was to reject the offer as he felt it would display discrimination in favour of Scotland.³⁰ He continued to maintain that emigration must be selective. His advice was heeded.

In addition to introducing remedial policy modifications in the field, Elliot initiated policy changes within the Colonial Office to streamline administrative procedure and avoid unnecessary delays. On occasion, this proved to be far from straightforward. In 1838 he raised with Stephen the inconvenience of the existing system of authorizing payments to the emigration agent for New South Wales in respect of expenditure on emigration. Stephen supported Elliot's view that the procedure was 'inconvenient and discreditable' as it often took weeks to approve payments, which the agent had expended from his own pocket. To reduce the delay, Elliot recommended that authorization for the payments could be

²⁹ Annual Report of the Agent General for Emigration, 1837, CO 384/46; Elliot to Stephen, 21 May 1838, CO 384/46; Elliot to Stephen, 24 Apr. 1839, CO 384/53.

³⁰ Elliott to Stephen, 2 Feb. 1838, CO 384/46.

undertaken within the Colonial Office, rather than the Treasury. The Secretary of State approved Elliot's proposals. Furthermore, he directed that Elliot would be the nominated person to authorize the payments and then report on his actions. Yet although Stephen was keen to promote a more efficient and less time-consuming procedure, he did not approve of permanent staff such as Elliot having responsibility for Treasury payments. He felt the arrangement was 'difficult' as the money in question was placed at the Secretary of State's disposal by the Treasury for specific public service. To delegate that responsibility to a subordinate officer, was, he felt, unwise. His three main concerns were that: the office could be accused of great irregularity; Elliot would become in effect a 'public accountant'; and, although Stephen admitted that it would be extremely unlikely, Elliot might divert the funds for his own use.³¹ This episode discloses that even with officials he trusted and respected, Stephen was anxious to prevent any charges of impropriety among his staff. More significantly, that he did not always approve of senior officials being given too much responsibility. This goes some way to supporting Shaw's conclusion that Stephen's organization of the office, ensured that senior clerks would not take policy decisions or act 'virtually like under-secretaries'.³²

Other attempts by Elliot at simplifying procedures and policy connected with emigration, however, were more successful. When Elliot took up his post as Agent-General, it was established practice that an allowance was made to surgeons of emigrant ships for the expenses of their mess. The actual amount for the mess charges were negotiable between the surgeon and the masters or owners of the

³¹ See the correspondence between Elliot, Stephen and Grey in CO 348/48.

³² A.G.L. Shaw, 'James Stephen and Colonial Policy: The Australian Experience', pp. 11-34.

ships. Elliot considered this to be undesirable practice and one which was open to abuse and malpractice. He recommended that one fixed price should be included in the charter party of all emigrant ships throughout the United Kingdom, and that the amount should be paid directly to the owners.³³ The Secretary of State approved Elliot's proposals and recommended that the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty should adopt the same course of action for Australian emigrant ships engaged under their directions.³⁴ This is a seemingly minor policy change, but one which had wider implications.

One area of policy change within the Colonial Office which has attracted the attention of historians is the establishment of the CLEC in 1840. The influence of colonial reformers has loomed large in interpretations of the events surrounding its genesis.³⁵ After the appointment of an Agent-General for Emigration in 1837, Wakefield and colonial reformers continued to call for a land and emigration board of the type suggested by the Committee on Waste Lands in 1836. Such an organisation, it was envisaged would have control of both emigration and land policy. Durham in his Report had called for the establishment of a central commission in England to regulate colonial land sales and superintend emigration to the British colonies. After Russell replaced Glenelg at the Colonial Office he announced – in January 1840 – the creation of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission. Madgwick gave Wakefield overall credit for persuading Russell to establish the commission, although he does also refer to Stephen's influence.³⁶ Stephen raised the question of administrative reorganisation in December 1839 and

³³ Elliot recommended that the sum should be £60.

³⁴ Elliot to Stephen, 1 Mar. 1838 and Stephen to Elliot, 15 Mar. 1838, CO 384/46.

³⁵ See Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*, pp. 31-44; also Madgwick, *Immigration*, pp. 169-71.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

recommended the appointment of a board of three commissioners.³⁷ Stephen felt that one efficient authority was needed with enlarged powers of supervision over the whole detailed business of emigration and the sale of wasteland. On the grounds of efficiency and economy, he proposed to combine the functions and staff of the Agent-General and the South Australian Commissioners.³⁸ Approval was given for Stephen's scheme and the office of Agent General for Emigration was merged into the CLEC and the machinery which Elliot had constructed and directed was transferred to it.

But what of Elliot's contribution in the deliberations and negotiations surrounding the introduction of the CLEC? Can examination of his actions and responsibilities shed further light on the Commission's inception? The colonial reformers had kept up sustained pressure and propaganda for a more systematic plan of colonization, and the *Durham Report* provided the perfect opportunity to bring further leverage. But the reasons behind Stephen's proposals are worth examination. Hitchins observed that in 1839 the 'materials' for a Commission were 'ready at hand – Agent General, emigration officers and South Australian Commissioners'.³⁹ It appears a series of incidents brought the matter to a head. In December 1839 the South Australian Commissioners approached Stephen requesting that they be paid salaries.⁴⁰ At the same time Elliot was requesting an increase in his salary.⁴¹ Elliot no doubt believed that the extra responsibilities he had assumed and his overwhelming workload deserved financial acknowledgement.

³⁷ Stephen to Russell, 10 Dec. 1839, CO 13/15.

³⁸ These commissioners acted as an intermediary board between the Colonial Office and the colony of South Australia, which was colonized by private emigration along the lines recommended by Wakefield and his followers.

³⁹ Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*, p. 36.

⁴⁰ The Chairman, Torrens, already received a salary, the other commissioners were unpaid.

⁴¹ Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*, p. 39.

But his request could also have been a shrewd move by Elliot, perhaps at Stephen's instigation. Pressure was mounting from Wakefield and the colonial reformers for a land board. Furthermore it was becoming increasingly obvious that Elliot's small department was inadequate for handling the problems of a hugely increased emigration system. Emigration was by this time requiring more effective supervision and the sheer range and volume of business had become overwhelming for Elliot. The number of applicants had increased dramatically and with it the volume of paper work during the three years of Elliot's service. Departures for New South Wales had increased from 1,721 in 1836 to 10,549 in 1839.⁴² Burroughs suggested that as emigration had now become 'an integral part of the...business of government...it required an organization to match its new importance'.⁴³ Elliot's request for a salary increase may well have been timed to provoke a seemingly 'spontaneous response' from Stephen. Then the Colonial Office could take the initiative in changes in the organisation of land and emigration.⁴⁴ Both Elliot and Stephen had personal motives for ensuring they retained their influence. Despite the expansion of Elliot's office during the three years of his tenure as Agent-General, there were indications that the Emigration Fund from land sales in New South Wales was decreasing and therefore there was a possibility that emigration would be cut back. Furthermore, as the emigration office had attained a more permanent status by the end of 1838, Elliot had resigned all further claims upon his former situation, a senior clerkship, in the Colonial

⁴² Madgwick, *Immigration*, p. 223.

⁴³ P.Burroughs, *Britain and Australia*, p. 217.

⁴⁴ Hitchins suggested that the Colonial Office was awaiting a 'good opportunity' to clarify the powers of the South Australian Commissioners and the Colonial Office.

Office.⁴⁵ Elliot would have some concerns about acquiring another permanent post within the colonial service, if his emigration office was superseded by a land commission. As Stephen bitterly resented the criticism directed at him by some Colonial Reformers – especially Wakefield and Buller – during his period of tenure, he would recognise the benefits of playing a leading role in any transformation of organisational structure of land policy and emigration.

Stephen proposed amalgamating the Agent-General's office with that of the South Australian Commissioners. He believed it would result in increased efficiency and financial saving. Significantly, Stephen requested Elliot to prepare a report to show the saving which could be achieved by the merging of the two offices and the establishment of 'a Commission of Three'. The report carried both Elliot's and Torrens' signatures, but the report and calculations are entirely in Elliot handwriting.⁴⁶ In this way Elliot was able to wield not insignificant influence in the deliberations from which the CLEC emerged.

The South Australian Commissioners were dismissed on 23 December, and in January 1840 Elliot, Colonel Robert Torrens and Edward Villiers were appointed members of the CLEC. By this time much of the framework which became the basis for government emigration for the next two decades had been put in place – by Elliot and his department. As senior commissioner, Elliot was able to retain influence over emigration policy and build on his earlier foundations. The leading role Elliot assumed in the developments, amendments and new legislation

⁴⁵ Elliot to Glenelg, 17 Dec. 1838, CO 384/48. Hitchins suggested that Elliot's decision to resign was due largely to 'not wishing to retain an indirect advantage at the expense of injustice to others'. This is certainly the reason given in his letter of resignation to Glenelg. Whether he would have done so if his post as Agent General had been less secure, however, can only be speculation. Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*, pp. 27-8

⁴⁶ Report signed by Elliot and Torrens, 22 Dec. 1839, CO 384/52. Details of the report are included in Hitchins, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*, pp. 39-42.

concerning the Passenger Acts during the 1840s, discussed in the previous chapter, is indicative of his degree of power. As Assistant Under-Secretary of State from 1847, Elliot was keen to maintain an active interest in Australian affairs – he was now capable of wielding even more sway over policy. Following their appointment in 1847 on Stephen's retirement,⁴⁷ Merivale and Elliot were instructed that they

should both take care that before Papers are forwarded by them, all information required for deciding upon them is collected, and that when it is possible (as it generally is) they shd. be minuted with such full suggestions upon them, as to require no more than the initials of Mr. Hawes⁴⁸ and myself [Grey] as assenting to what is suggested. The demands upon the time of the Secretary of State and of the Parliamentary Under Secretary are so heavy that business should be brought before them in the most complete state of preparation.⁴⁹

Although as Assistant Under-Secretary Elliot had additional responsibilities, he retained his interest and concern in Australian affairs, particularly emigration. Correspondence and reports of the CLEC were usually seen and approved by him and his recommendations and instructions carefully minuted.⁵⁰

The evidence presented above demonstrates that Elliot played a significant role in the formulation of policy for administration of emigration. Establishing the

⁴⁷ Merivale was appointed as an Assistant Under Secretary of State in Nov. 1847 as a temporary measure until Stephen was officially retired. Stephen stopped working at the Colonial Office in 1847 due to ill health, but did not officially retire until 1848. Merivale succeeded Stephen in 1848.

⁴⁸ Parliamentary Under-Secretary, 6 July 1846 – 1 Nov. 1851, Sainty, *Colonial Office Officials*, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Circular, 20 Dec. 1847, Colonial Office Minutes No. 41, quoted in Cell, 'The Colonial Office in the 1850s', pp. 43-56.

⁵⁰ See for example correspondence between Elliot and the CLEC, 1847, CO 201/389; 1848, CO 201/406; 1848-50, CO 325/47.

degree and extent of Elliot's influence, however, goes only part of the way to explaining the process and development of executive administrative practice during the period. To understand fully the circumstances which enabled and consolidated his authority, other questions need to be addressed. What prevailing conditions and circumstances empowered his ascendancy? How was Elliot able to sustain his influence?

The Colonial Office

Elliot joined the Colonial Department during a period of considerable growth for the office. The sheer expansion of Empire had brought considerable administrative problems. The volume of correspondence had almost doubled in the years following the peace of 1815, and it became considerably more complex and technical.⁵¹ When Horton took up the post of Parliamentary Under-Secretary in December 1821, Greville warned him: 'you will be assailed with documents of bulk immeasurable, without one interval for repose'.⁵² Stephen pointed to the incessant demands on Colonial Office time and the bulk and variety of the details of the business, which were unknown in other departments and which resulted in the Secretary of State being 'dependent upon others' in the discharge of his duties.⁵³ It was recognized that changes were essential if the Colonial Office was to administer colonial policy effectively. Horton, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, was instrumental in the reorganization of the office during the 1820s. His new arrangements in the structure and hierarchy of the office were in part an attempt to

⁵¹ Snelling and Barron, 'The Colonial Office: its permanent officials 1801-1914', p.141.

⁵² Greville to Horton, 4 Dec. 1821, quoted in Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, p.34.

⁵³ Stephen memorandum, 30 Mar. 1832, CO 537/22.

deal with the prolific growth of colonial business.⁵⁴ During 1824, the year prior to Elliot's appointment, additional clerks were recruited and the office remodelled. 1825 witnessed further expansion.⁵⁵

Among the new young clerks that Horton brought in was Elliot. In retrospect, it seems appropriate that Elliot joined the Colonial Office during Horton's tenure. It was at this time that Horton's preoccupation with emigration was at its strongest and it is possible, that he spotted in Elliot qualities that would be useful for the administration of emigration. Snelling and Barron suggested that perhaps Horton's greatest skill was his ability to identify and exploit potential administrative talent.⁵⁶ Some of the clerks who provided a pool for this administrative talent began their career in the Colonial Office during the 1820s and formed a 'distinct generational grouping'⁵⁷ which lasted to the late 1860s. Alongside Elliot, Sir Henry Taylor, Sir George Barrow and Gordon Gairdner, and Arthur Blackwood are included in this grouping. Cell described them as having 'specialized vocational experience rather than general education'. But only Elliot rose above the rank of senior clerk.⁵⁸ The increase in personnel was accompanied by a new office structure that gave officials the opportunity to assume new responsibility. The evolving structure of the department, to keep pace with these significant changes, was to have a profound effect on the way colonial business

⁵⁴ For accounts of the growth and development of the Colonial Office and colonial business see Henry L. Hall, *The Colonial Office: a history*, (London, New York, Toronto, 1937); J.C. Beaglehole, 'The Colonial Office, 1782-1854', *Historical Studies*, I (1941) pp. 170-89; R.C. Snelling and T.J. Barron, 'The Colonial Office: its permanent officials 1801-1914', in Gillian Sutherland (ed.), *Studies in the growth of nineteenth-century government* (London, 1972), p. 141.

⁵⁵ For details and comparison of the office establishment for 1821 and 1825 see Appendix 6.

⁵⁶ Snelling and Barron, 'The Colonial Office', p. 140.

⁵⁷ Cell, *British Colonial Administration*, p. 22.

⁵⁸ Henry Taylor turned down promotion at various stages of his career in order to spend more time on his literary works.

was handled and more particularly on the policy-making process. The heavy workload fell on both parliamentary and non-parliamentary staff,⁵⁹ factors which had great significance for the permanent officials and the responsibility which some civil servants were able to assume – responsibility which gave them a marked influence over the administration of colonial affairs.

Not all civil servants were considered capable and knowledgeable enough to become involved in the policy-making process. Stephen was extremely conscious that many of the Colonial Office's permanent officers were deficient in terms of the quality required for efficient administration, and these 'incompetent beings'⁶⁰ were certainly not considered capable of advising ministers. There appears to have been a favoured few upon whom this honour fell, and Elliot was certainly a member of this exclusive club. Although it was the Secretary of State who made the ultimate decision as with whom he should consult, while Stephen held office ministers tended to rely upon his judgement and counsel regarding suitable officers. Elliot's administrative skills did not go unnoticed by Stephen. Writing to Howick in 1832, proposing further reorganization of the office and the need to promote the most able staff, Stephen advised that the office needed the 'advancement of our most able men to the most responsible places'. Not

⁵⁹ Stephen's workload was immense and much of his work was done at home during the evenings. His reluctance to delegate and his painstaking approach to administration must account for some of the burden. For more detailed accounts of Stephen's character and work ethic see Knaplund, *James Stephen* (1953); C.E. Stephen, *The First Sir James Stephen* (1906).

⁶⁰ Papers relating to the Reorganization of the Civil Service, quoted in J.C. Beaglehole, 'The Colonial Office', pp. 170-89.

renowned for expressing approval or admiration for his young clerks,⁶¹ he noted that he had,

both at the Bar, & in this Whitehall world, seen & observed many young men struggling for distinction; and I can say with the utmost confidence, that both Elliot and Murdoch have powers and aptitudes of such a nature as would in any profession in which competition had a free scope ensure them success & even eminence...to place two such young men as Elliot and Murdoch in places of great push may be fairly regarded as an object of national importance.⁶²

Stephen's regard for Elliot is evidently reinforced when examining Stephen's opinion on Chinese and Indian coolie immigration into Australia. In 1843 Stephen drew attention to the dangers of encouraging such migration. He argued that the coolies would 'beat down the wages of the poor labouring Europeans'.⁶³ Strikingly, these declarations by Stephen resemble closely both the ideas and prose which Elliot put forward six years earlier in 1837 about coolie immigration.⁶⁴ This suggests therefore, that Stephen may well have absorbed ideas from Elliot or looked to him for advice.

In addition to the increasing volume of business, the nature and distribution

⁶¹ For example, in a memorandum on the frequency of ministerial change and the way the Colonial Office functioned, Stephen complained that the office was 'a bad school for training up its younger members, for they have scarcely any hardships to contend with; are almost wholly exempt from the discipline which their age requires; and are probably devoting their leisure hours much more to fashionable society than to those studies which should fit them for the position to which they aspire'. He believed temporary copyists were often a better option than some of the young clerks and noted that 'one man writing at 1d. per folio would do more work, and do it better, than twelve Young Gentlemen copying Papers in the interval between their Morning Rides and their Afternoon Dinner Parties'. Stephen memorandum, Private and Confidential, 30 Mar. 1832, CO 537/22.

⁶² Stephen to Howick, 10 Feb. 1832, Grey papers, GRE/B126/11.

⁶³ Stephen minute, 12 Sept. 1843, CO 201/333.

⁶⁴ See Elliot to Mill, 4 Dec. 1837, CO 386/21.

of the workload of Colonial Office was also affected by a frequent turnover of secretaries of state. During a career which spanned 42 years, Elliot served under 23 different parliamentary heads.⁶⁵ In 1855, no fewer than five different secretaries of state held office.⁶⁶ With an average term of office of only approximately 1.6 years, the colonial secretaries during this period were fleeting incumbents who would rarely be able to master and absorb the knowledge and expertise required to develop and direct such wide-ranging policies as colonial administration demanded. The 3rd Earl Grey believed the greatest defect in colonial policy at this time was the frequent changes in policy and the failure to adhere to any one system. This was due, he believed, to the rapid succession of Secretaries of State.⁶⁷ The problem was compounded by the element of distance involved with the Australian colonies. Dispatches and other correspondence could take months to reach their destination, by which time a new Secretary of State might have been installed. Not surprisingly, they turned to permanent officials for advice. Cell argued that the rapid turnover of ministers did not preclude continuity and purpose, as the permanent staff were fully capable of providing the knowledge and the intellect for the formulation of 'a purposeful and fairly consistent colonial policy'.⁶⁸

Colonial reformers were deeply critical of a system which they believed gave permanent staff too great a role in decision making. Molesworth drew attention to the ineffectual role of the Secretary of State for the Colonies during a parliamentary debate in 1849. Roebuck brought the issue to the attention of

⁶⁵ Some Secretaries of State served more than one term of office, See Appendix 7.

⁶⁶ See Appendix 6.

⁶⁷ Howick to Stephen and enclosures, 25 Feb. 1845, Stephen papers, Add. 7888 II/118.

⁶⁸ John W. Cell, 'The Colonial Office in the 1850s', *Historical Studies*, xii (1965), pp. 43-56.

Parliament during a debate on the New Zealand Company. Stephen took exception to his speech and complained to Roebuck that he felt his comments to be an unwarranted attack upon himself and his staff. In response, Roebuck defended his stance and argued that as the incoming Secretary of State was usually unacquainted with the duties of the office, by necessity he was reliant on the guidance of the

nominally inferior, but permanent & experienced, officer in the Colonial department - & so great was the necessary power thus conferred upon the irresponsible & unknown officer, that the ostensible Colonial Minister, who before the world appeared the real & efficient governor of our Colonial Empire, was in fact in most cases but the unconscious instrument to carry out the views of his experienced & permanent subordinate.⁶⁹

Buller complained of the wide-ranging influence and power of the permanent official over his political superior, which was immortalized in his stereotype 'Mr Mother Country', a faceless civil servant who wielded ruinous influence over Britain's colonial affairs.⁷⁰ Grey willingly acknowledged that Stephen had exercised some influence in colonial policy but when Stephen came under attack from colonial reformers for exerting too much power in the Colonial Office, Grey supported him by stating firmly that it would have been more beneficial to the public interest if Stephen had exercised a greater influence than he actually had.⁷¹

The political power and professional capabilities of the chiefs under whom Elliot served varied considerably. These characteristics dictated to some

⁶⁹ Roebuck to Stephen, n.d., Stephen papers, Add. 7888 II/118.

⁷⁰ Charles Buller, *Responsible Government for Colonies* (1840).

⁷¹ Howick to Stephen, 25 Feb. 1845, Stephen papers, Add. 7888 II/118, f. 343.

considerable degree the sway permanent officials including Elliot were able to achieve. The circumstance of the good parliamentary secretaries leaving office quickly and the poor ones lingering has been alluded to as a factor in Stephen's pre-eminence in colonial policy.⁷² Some Secretaries of State, such as Goderich, were judged to be weak by both contemporaries and historians. Howick complained to his father, the 2nd Earl Grey, about Goderich's indecision and inaction which added to his workload and noted,

therefore I cannot feel that questions much too important to be left to my unassisted discretion would thus practically have been entirely committed to me, had I not hitherto had the advantage of the advice of Mr. Stephen...the dispute which is now going on with the Assembly of Lower Canada...has been entirely managed by myself and Mr Stephen...if Mr Stephen had not been in the office...the very serious errors into which I had fallen would have remained uncorrected, and would have led to more than one practical false step of the most serious kind.⁷³

Glenelg was another Secretary of State who was considered weak by contemporaries, a view which has been reinforced by historians.⁷⁴ Glenelg's hesitancy and procrastination were well known in government circles. Taylor, well placed to make a considered judgement, noted that for the years when Glenelg held the seals of office, Stephen ruled.⁷⁵ It has been argued that taking in account the number of changes and also the amount of 'mediocrity' among the secretaries of

⁷² E.T. Williams, 'The Colonial Office in the Thirties', *Historical Studies*, 2 (1942-3), pp. 145-60.

⁷³ Howick to Grey, 29 May, 1832, Grey papers, GRE/C2

⁷⁴ For example, Williams, 'The Colonial Office in the Thirties', pp. 145-60.

⁷⁵ Taylor, *Autobiography*, i, p. 233.

state, it was natural that civil servants would, at times, have great influence.⁷⁶ However, there were strong ministers in office during Elliot's time, who went on to achieve even higher office. Russell, Howick, Stanley and Gladstone are particularly notable.

Much therefore depended upon the relationship permanent officials were able to establish with the secretaries and parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State. Howick served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies between 1830 and 1833. Although – now Earl Grey– he did not return to the Colonial Office until 1846 as Secretary of State, he kept in touch with permanent staff such as Stephen, Taylor and Elliot and always maintained a keen interest in colonial affairs.⁷⁷ Howick had identified Elliot as an able and knowledgeable clerk during his first period of office as Under-Secretary to Goderich. As an Emigration Commissioner, Howick had had first-hand experience of Elliot's work as emigration secretary and administrator. He was impressed by his administrative skills, and was influential in securing Elliot promotion to the position of senior clerk in the North American department of the Colonial Office. As the political crisis in the Canadas deepened during the 1830s and parliament began to take a greater interest in their affairs, there was a need for more energetic and able clerks and therefore Howick persuaded Goderich to place Elliot in charge of the North American department in 1833.⁷⁸ This was undoubtedly a significant step in Elliot's career and was indicative of the esteem in which Howick held him. Elliot evidently

⁷⁶ J.C. Beaglehole, 'The Colonial Office, 1782-1854', pp. 170-89.

⁷⁷ See for example Grey's journal, entry dated 1 March 1834, GRE/C8.

⁷⁸ Buckner, 'The Colonial Office and British North America 1801-1850', p. xxxi.

reciprocated this esteem. After Howick's resignation in 1833⁷⁹ Elliot wrote that 'if ever you [Howick] think of us in Downing Street, you may be sure that one who never again can labour with the same devotion to his business which he felt under you, is Your sincere and grateful servant Thos. Frederick Elliot'.⁸⁰ Elliot rarely indulged in writing to his superiors in such terms and therefore this expression of regard is particularly noteworthy.

Elliot undoubtedly began to make a name for himself in the Colonial Office during the early 1830s. However, it was through his secondment as Secretary to Lord Gosford's Commission of Inquiry into Canadian affairs in 1835 that Elliot made his initial significant mark on colonial affairs and policy.⁸¹ The choice of Elliot as secretary appears an obvious move following his promotion within the North American Department. Glenelg explained that Elliot had been appointed in consideration of the experience he had gained in the Colonial Office and particularly for his knowledge of the recent political history of the Canadian provinces. But more significantly, Glenelg referred to Elliot's general ability, of talents 'both natural and acquired for civil business, and of habitual discretion and secrecy learned by the devotion of several years to official life'.⁸² Glenelg therefore directed that Elliot was to be present at all deliberations and to 'assist by such suggestions or statements as he may think it right to communicate'.⁸³ Elliot's secondment to the Canadian commission was the first time a clerk had been seconded to duties outside the office,⁸⁴ and this set a precedent for the future.

⁷⁹ Stanley succeeded Howick.

⁸⁰ Elliot to Howick, 6 Apr. 1833, Grey papers, GRE/ B84/11.

⁸¹ For a summary of the work of the Gosford Commission see Ged Martin, *The Durham Report and British Policy; a Critical Essay* (Cambridge, 1972) pp. 9-11.

⁸² Grey papers, Journal of 3rd Earl, GRE/C8.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Sainty, *Colonial Office Officials*, p. 4.

Henry Taylor gave some indication of the significance of Elliot's role in his autobiography. He pointed out that while Elliot's administrative capabilities were known within the civil service, his 'political judgement and penetration were known to few, and might have been wholly unknown, had he not been sent to Canada in 1835'.⁸⁵ During his time with the Gosford Commission, Elliot wrote regularly to Taylor detailing the state of affairs in Canada and offering his personal perspective and analysis of the situation. These letters clearly impressed Howick who had them circulated in cabinet.⁸⁶ In the following months Howick pressed for Glenelg to take firm action over Canada and again he referred Glenelg to Elliot's letters as a source of valuable information from which 'the general line of our policy ought at once to be determined'.⁸⁷ In effect Elliot became a '4th Commissioner',⁸⁸ and Howick requested him to provide 'information for my guidance...as to what ought to be done' and sought Elliot's opinion as to whether he thought his proposals for government policy might succeed.⁸⁹ Evidently, then, it was not merely Stephen and Taylor who were influential with Howick, as Manning has suggested.⁹⁰ There is no doubt that Elliot's reputation was enhanced during this period. This episode in Elliot's career was significant for the future of Australian emigration, as during his time with the Gosford Commission Elliot had demonstrated an ability to analyse and advise on colonial policy. As his services had not gone unnoticed by Howick, it was almost inevitable that on his return to

⁸⁵ H. Taylor, *Autobiography of Henry Taylor*, vol. 1, (London, 1885), p. 162.

⁸⁶ Howick to Taylor, n.d. 1835, Elliot papers, MS 19422/41.

⁸⁷ Howick to Glenelg, 10 Dec. 1835 and 19 April 1836, Grey papers, GRE/B87/6.

⁸⁸ Buckner, 'The Colonial Office and British North America 1801-1850', p. xxxi.

⁸⁹ Howick to Elliot, 'Private', 19 May 1836, Elliot papers, MS 19421/8.

⁹⁰ Manning, 'Who ran the British Empire?', pp. 88-121.

England he was offered the chance of another favourable career move - that of Agent-General for Emigration.

When Grey returned to the Colonial Office in 1846 as Secretary of State, he again looked to Elliot for advice and suggestions on systematic colonization and the Australian colonies. In 1847, with no hope of finance from the Treasury for emigration, Grey had hoped to raise funds from Scottish landlords to buy land in Australia so that emigrants from their estates could be sent out and settle there. But writing to Buller, Grey confided that he had discussed various plans in detail with Elliot who had thrown 'cold water upon the whole scheme'. Grey was by no means convinced that the proposals would not work, but Elliot had highlighted difficulties, he observed, which he believed were difficult to overcome.⁹¹ Grey therefore did not proceed any further with the scheme.

Convict transportation was another area where Grey sought Elliot's counsel and advice. Grey proposed to have transportation resurrected in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land and requested Elliot to draw up a paper on convict transportation.⁹² Grey did not agree with some of the proposals Elliot put forward, however he did concur with much of Elliot's advice regarding the issue. Evidence suggests, therefore, that the trust and regard between senior permanent officials, such as Elliot, and their parliamentary superiors was crucial in the amount of influence civil servants could exercise over policy affecting government administration of the colonies.

This is not to say that Grey sanctioned everything that Elliot proposed or

⁹¹ Grey to Buller, 'Private', 23 Feb. 1847, Grey papers, GRE/B79/11.

⁹² Printed paper on Transportation and Emigration, 25 Jan. 1850, Grey papers, GRE/B150/ 3. As Assistant Under-Secretary from 1847, Elliot had responsibility within the department for transportation.

unfailingly heeded his advice. But this does not indicate that he did not hold substantial sway. An assessment of the extent of civil servant's power must consider the significance and import of the policy in which he did exercise influence over an extended period – it must consider the long-term consequence. In arguing that the influence of permanent officials at the Colonial Office had been exaggerated, Hall asserted that on occasion Stephen had had 'nothing to do with some particular piece of business' and that Henry Taylor had his advice disregarded on two important occasions.⁹³ There is some merit in this line of argument. But what of the evidence which demonstrates the power they were able to wield on other occasions? Such testimony should not be rejected or ignored so readily.

The additional responsibilities which Elliot was able to assume under different secretaries of state enabled him to accumulate specialized knowledge of emigration. The expertise he and his department developed assured his ascendancy in the framing of policy. Because emigration was a new function of government, there were no existing administrative or policy precedents. Elliot was in an extremely strong position to shape and mould emigration policy. The sheer volume of work with which he personally had to deal gave him a valuable insight into the emigration business. Elliot noted that when he first began dealing with emigration as Agent General in 1837 the number of letters to and from the office was 1,600 per annum, and the total number of emigrants from the United Kingdom 33,000. Ten years later, he and his staff were dealing with 79,000 letters per year,

⁹³ Hall, *The Colonial Office*, p. 51; p. 268.

and the number of emigrants had risen to 250,000.⁹⁴ During his early involvement with emigration, when he lacked support staff, Elliot had to undertake many of the duties himself, but the experience he gained and the understanding he developed became crucial to his authority for formulating policy. The leading role he was able to assume with the CLEC and his work on the Passenger Acts reflected the extent of the knowledge he had accumulated. The 1842 Passenger Act was largely prepared by Elliot. There were few amendments to the Bill – it was very much as it had left the CLEC.⁹⁵ MacDonagh cited the new Act of 1842 as a prime example of ‘expert government’.⁹⁶

Elliot’s expertise and specialization made him an obvious choice as witness for select committees, whose findings and recommendations could substantially influence government policy. Notable select committees to which he gave evidence include the Select Committee on South Australia 1841 and the House of Lords Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland 1847-48. Before these committees Elliot was given the opportunity to promote his personal opinions and preferences which could affect the direction of future policy. His evidence to the committee on colonization from Ireland was particularly influential. Elliot’s used his time before the committee profitably, by promoting the practicability and efficiency of government policy for emigration over other proposed colonization theories and systems.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ This figure quoted by Elliot included ‘large numbers of the Coloured Races...procured and carries from India and from Africa to the West Indies’. Elliot memorandum, n.d. November 1868, Elliot papers, MS 19432 (224).

⁹⁵ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, p.153.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.147.

⁹⁷ *B.P.P.* 1847 (737) VI; Minutes of Evidence, *B.P.P.* 1847-48 (415) XVII.

Elliot's milieu

Another determinant of Elliot's authority was the social arena in which he moved. Family connections secured Elliot's acceptance into the exclusive sphere of London society. It was in this élite company that he socialised with those of influence in colonial affairs and with leading politicians such as Lord John Russell, whose wife Frances⁹⁸ was Elliot's second cousin. The Russells lived near the Elliots in Chesham Place.⁹⁹ Elliot and his wife dined with them frequently, and they met at family gatherings at Minto House, seat of the Earls of Minto. Russell of course was particularly influential. He became Colonial Secretary under Melbourne in 1839 and held the office of Prime Minister from 1846 until 1852. Family, and especially Lady Frances Russell's, alleged influence over Russell is widely known. It is evident that Elliot was in the confidence of his cousin, especially with regard to Russell and government business. Elliot himself recognised and referred to 'Johnny's'¹⁰⁰ preoccupation with his 'little family clique' consisting of 'some twenty of his relations & connections'.¹⁰¹ Much as Elliot valued Lady Russell's friendship, he was conscious of her 'pernicious influence' over Russell and alive to the complaints of his colleagues about the situation.¹⁰² Whatever Elliot's opinions were about the merits and consequences of such circumstances, he could not have been unaware of the benefits to himself. There

⁹⁸ Frances was Russell's second wife.

⁹⁹ The houses of Chesham Place varied in size; the Russell's lived at number 38, which was a large stately house. Elliot lived in two houses at various times, numbers 37 and 13, both smaller houses than Russell's, but nonetheless, impressive addresses for a civil servant of Elliot's rank.

¹⁰⁰ Russell was known affectionately by friends and family as 'little Johnny' or 'Johnny'.

¹⁰¹ See for example, Senior Journal entry 4 Feb. 1855, Senior papers, A19/39-43.

¹⁰² Russell's nephew, Arthur, requested Senior's daughter, Mrs. Simpson, to omit Elliot's references to the nature of Lady Russell's influence over her husband from the book she published concerning her father's papers. Russell to Simpson, 5 Sept. 1890, Senior papers, E646

were occasions where Russell officially supported Elliot.¹⁰³ Russell's involvement with the establishment of the CLEC, from which Elliot emerged in a favourable position, must also be viewed in the light of their relationship.

Elliot had other influential friends. Lord Stanley (14th Earl of Derby),¹⁰⁴ Canning, Howick, Gladstone, and Goderich were other politicians with whom he socialized on a regular basis.¹⁰⁵ Elliot's house was described by friends as where 'most of the persons who were writing and reading and making speeches' met.¹⁰⁶ His social circle also included fellow civil servants such as Henry Taylor, Nassau Senior, Thomas Murdoch, Edward Villiers,¹⁰⁷ John Stuart Mill and Charles Trevelyan. Social occasions offered the ideal opportunity for discussion of colonial administration. It was here that policy could be influenced or determined. As government office hours began as late as 11 a.m. for senior civil servants and their parliamentary superiors, it was common practice for a number of them to meet for breakfast. Elliot and his colleagues regularly participated in these morning gatherings, often at Taylor's or Gladstone's house. They then leisurely walked together through St. James's Park to their offices.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately for researchers, such meetings produced very little manuscript record. Some individuals did record the topic or the outcome of these meetings in journals and diaries.¹⁰⁹ But Elliot's papers do not include any journals and he tended to record

¹⁰³ See for example Russell's letter to Gipps supporting Elliot's response to Pinnock's Immigration Report. Russell to Gipps, 22 Feb. 1840, ML A1282/335-6.

¹⁰⁴ Elliot and Stanley occasionally travelled abroad together. See, for example, Elliot's diary 1865, Elliot papers, MS 19429.

¹⁰⁵ See for example Elliot's diary for 1849, Elliot papers, MS 19428; Charles and Frances Brookfield, *Mrs Brookfield and her Circle*, vol. I, 1809-1847 (London, 2nd ed. 1905), pp. 359,404.

¹⁰⁶ Anne I. Thackeray (later Ritchie), *Blackstick Papers with portraits* (London, 1908), p.cxxvii.

¹⁰⁷ Brother to the 4th Earl of Clarendon.

¹⁰⁸ Carlyle to Mill, n.d. 1840, E.W. Marris, Jr. *The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to his Brother Alexander with related family letters* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 457-9.

¹⁰⁹ See for example 3rd Earl Grey's journal 1834, GRE/ C8.

in his diaries¹¹⁰ only the names of those with whom he met on such occasions. These entries do confirm, however, that not only did he count the cream of London society within his circle, but also those who were influential in colonial affairs.

Learned societies and clubs were other spheres where Elliot could meet with influential friends and acquaintances. It has been remarked that 'by their Clubs ye shall know them',¹¹¹ and this holds particular relevance for Elliot and his circle. He held membership in the Sterling Club¹¹² which met monthly at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Gladstone, Spedding,¹¹³ Merivale, the Spring Rice brothers,¹¹⁴ and Murdoch were among those listed as members.¹¹⁵ Elliot's interest in science drew him to the Royal Institution of Great Britain whose library provided the perfect meeting place for discussion with fellow members from the ranks of government and civil service.¹¹⁶ One notable exception from the influential social scene was Stephen, who, for reasons of his evangelical background, tended to shun 'society' and avoid social gatherings.¹¹⁷ Elliot did however socialize with Stephen on the occasions when Elliot and his wife were invited to stay with Stephen and his

¹¹⁰ Elliot's diaries are small, pocket diaries and therefore detail is kept to a minimum.

¹¹¹ G.S.R. Kitson Clark, *An Expanding Society: Britain 1830-1900* (Cambridge and Melbourne, 1967), p. 33.

¹¹² Printed membership leaflet for The Sterling Club, dated Jan. 1849, Elliot papers, MS 19432/249. Originally called the Anonymous Club and established in 1838, the name was changed in honour of James Sterling, author, friend of Carlyle and founder of the club. It was intended to provide the opportunity for Sterling and his 'select' friends to dine and talk together. Elliot numbered among the founder members. For a more detailed picture of the club and its activities see T. Carlyle, *The Life of John Sterling* (London, 1897) pp. 158-60.

¹¹³ Spedding was a Colonial Office Supernumerary Clerk, 1835-1841, and was a supporter of Wakefield before devoting much of his time to the study of Bacon.

¹¹⁴ Charles and Stephen Spring Rice, sons of Thomas Spring Rice, later Lord Monteagle, Secretary of State for the Colonies June-Nov 1834.

¹¹⁵ Printed paper on the Sterling Club, n.d., Elliot papers, MS 19432.

¹¹⁶ Elliot held the office of Vice President for 3 years, see minute books of meetings 1830-70 which also contain details of members, RI archives.

¹¹⁷ Wherever possible, he resisted all pleasurable social activity. Following an enjoyable breakfast with his friend Macaulay, he resolved never to do so again as he had found the occasion too pleasurable. Stephen, *The First Sir James Stephen*, pp. 100-11.

family. These interludes presented further opportunities for Elliot to discuss colonial business with his influential superior.¹¹⁸

The questions relating to Elliot's influence in policy development have involved assessment of his practical activities, his progressive expertise in emigration business, his administrative prowess and interaction with influential figures. This has gone some way to explaining Elliot's relevance within the policy-making process. But to achieve a complete understanding of the significance and implications of Elliot's role and influence, consideration must also be given to his principles – the tenets which guided his approach to administration of emigration policy.

¹¹⁸ Copy of entry in Stephen's journal for 17 Feb. 1842, Stephen papers, Add. 7888, Box 1, II/122. It appears that Elliot's wife was invited 'under suffrance [sic]'.

Chapter 6

Colonial reformers, Philosophical Radicals and administration of emigration

Previous studies which have embraced the management and mechanisms of government-assisted emigration have largely brought into focus the empirical aspects of Elliot's work. Little consideration has been given to his philosophical or intellectual persuasions. Even less has been revealed about his relationships with prominent theorists and men of ideas. Yet in the context of the historiography of nineteenth-century government growth and administration of emigration, these are crucial areas for examination. This chapter attempts to unveil not only his association with the prominent ideas of the period, but also his connections with some of the exponents of these varied philosophies. Such an approach offers revealing perspectives. From one angle it can throw new light on the origins and influences of government-directed emigration policy. From another point of view, it brings into sharper relief the interactions between government ministers, permanent officials and theorists that mediated this policy. These perspectives are best viewed in three contexts: first, Elliot's relationship and interaction with colonial reformers and philosophic radicals; second, his own formative influences; third, the practical challenges he faced in directing government-assisted emigrants to the Australian colonies.

Philosophical radicals, colonial reformers and Wakefield

The colonial reformers, or 'Theorists of 1830' as they became known, aspired to bring system and order to populating and governing the British colonies. They emerged from the distinct group of philosophical radicals who

were disciples of Jeremy Bentham, and his doctrine of Utilitarianism. Their plans were complicated and ambitious, but there were inconsistencies in their philosophy that undermined their success and tempered their achievements. Some of their basic principles found favour with ministers and permanent officials within the colonial department, but they were modified to suit prevailing conditions in the colonies and in Great Britain. Beginning as a small group, their numbers rose to over forty and included such men as Wakefield, Buller, Mill, Molesworth, Durham and Torrens. Wakefield, who was the main lobbyist for systematic emigration, described them as largely an 'unknown feeble body, composed chiefly of very young men, some...however...are among the most celebrated of the day'.¹ These men argued that only through systematic emigration policy could the potential of the British colonies be fully exploited. Their all-embracing objective was to gain parliamentary endorsement for a comprehensive system of emigration.

The influence exerted by Wakefield and his followers over land and emigration policies for the Australian colonies has provided historians with a fertile area of debate. There are three key assessments concerning the degree of influence exercised by the colonial reformers, and Wakefield in particular. First, that Wakefieldian influence led to significant changes in land and emigration policy.² Second, that the Ripon Regulations of 1831 were entirely a result of Wakefieldian influence, but that only minimal influence can be identified in

¹ Quoted in Paul Bloomfield, *Edward Gibbon Wakefield: Builder of the British Commonwealth* (London, 1961), p. 114.

² See for example: Herman Merivale, *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies delivered before the University of Oxford in 1839, 1840, & 1841*, (London, 2nd edition, 1861); R.C. Mills, *The Colonization of Australia, 1829-42* (London, 1915); W.P. Morrell, *Colonial Policy in the age of Peel and Russell* (Oxford, 1930).

subsequent administration and policy changes.³ Third, some Wakefieldian influence can be identified within imperial land and emigration policy, but that the changes of policy were often merely the results of Colonial Office procedure.⁴ Howick and Elliot were frequently criticised by colonial reformers. Wakefield in particular, accused them of distorting or simply ignoring the principles of systematic colonization as put forward in his theory. Yet Thornton's analysis of the philosophical radicals and their influence on emigration to the colonies suggested that Howick and Elliot were the two men who helped put into practice the colonial principles of the philosophical radicals during the 1840s and 50s.⁵ This apparent contradiction presents historians with the stimulating challenge of assessing the degree to which Elliot and Howick were influenced or guided by the colonial reformers, particularly with regard to government-assisted emigration. From his earliest days with the colonial service, Elliot had moved within the inner circles of the philosophical radicals, where he counted several of the colonial reformers among his close friends. How did Elliot reconcile these philosophical influences with his career in the Colonial Office? Did he adhere to Benthamite principles in his formulation of policy for emigration to the Australian colonies?

The introduction of the Ripon Regulations of 1831 was a landmark in colonial policy with particular implications for government-assisted emigration.⁶ This change in policy was also unexpected. In 1830, Wakefield and a number of his followers had established the National Colonization Society with the aim of

³ See for example P. Knapp, *James Stephen and the British Colonial System*.

⁴ June Philipp, 'Wakefieldian Influence and New South Wales 1830-1832', *Historical Studies*, ix (1960), pp. 173-80.

⁵ A.M. Thornton, *The Philosophical Radicals: Their Influence on Emigration and the Evolution of Responsible Government for the Colonies* (Claremont, 1975), p. 21.

⁶ These issues are dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 1.

promoting systematic colonization rather than 'mere emigration'.⁷ Their early approaches to Wellington's government had been unsuccessful. Both Sir George Murray and Hay rejected approaches from Wakefield and the Colonization Society.⁸ The former stated that the government wished to discourage emigration, as there was more than they knew how to deal with.⁹ The Colonization Society appears to have had more success with the new Whig ministry of 1830. By January 1831, changes in the disposal of waste lands in New South Wales were the harbingers of the Ripon Regulations, which were included in a despatch dated 14 February 1831. These instructions to Governor Darling concerned the disposal of waste lands and new regulations for free settlers.¹⁰ What prompted this relatively swift response from the Whig government? The colonial reformers themselves were in no doubt about the reasons for these new regulations. They identified them as adhering to the main principles of Wakefield's theory as proposed in his *Letter from Sydney*.¹¹ They claimed their representations to the government had brought about the changes, and named Howick as the minister responsible for drawing up the new regulations.¹² An article in the *Spectator* identified Howick as the first official convert to Wakefield's theory.¹³

Elliot confirmed that Wakefieldian influence had played a role in the policy changes of 1831. He recalled how the government had not been slow to

⁷ E.G. Wakefield, *The Art of Colonization*, p. 40.

⁸ In July 1829, an unsuccessful approach was made to the government by Robert Gouger, on behalf of Wakefield, who was still in prison at this time. Gouger forwarded to the Colonial Office a copy of Wakefield's pamphlet, *Sketch of a proposal for colonizing Australia*. Pamphlet enclosed in CO 201/206; see also Mills, *Colonization*, fn.1, p. 155.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.41; Mills, *Colonization*, p. 155.

¹⁰ Despatch dated 14 February, 1831, No.2 of Accounts and Papers, 1831, xix, p. 113.

¹¹ E.G. Wakefield, *A Letter from Sydney* (1829). Wakefield wrote this in prison in Newgate gaol.

¹² *Spectator*, 10 Sept. 1831; Wakefield, *Art of Colonization*, p.46; Mills, *Colonization*, p. 164.

¹³ *Spectator*, 4 January 1840; Mills, *Colonization*, p. 164.

adopt Wakefield's 'ingenious but just idea'.¹⁴ Elliot's testimony is critical in shedding light on events at this time as he was able to assess the situation from firsthand experience. It has been seen above that as secretary to the Emigration Commissioners of 1831, he had been intimately involved with the introduction and administration of the new regulations.¹⁵ Furthermore, it is reported that Wakefield and 'his men' addressed themselves to Howick through Elliot.¹⁶ This suggests that Elliot had had prior contact with either Wakefield or his supporters. More than once, Howick himself acknowledged that he had been swayed by Wakefield's writings. One such occasion was in 1839, during a speech in the House of Commons in which he stated that Wakefield's theory reflected

great honour upon the gentleman [Wakefield] by whom it was brought to light, and who first pointed out its influence upon the success of all schemes of colonization...I consider these principles to be not less important than they were novel at the time they were brought into notice by Mr. Wakefield.¹⁷

A report of a speech made by Howick during a dinner held in honour of Wakefield stated that Howick had informed the gathering that when he was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, he had 'endeavoured to give application to the system that Mr. Wakefield discovered'.¹⁸ June Philipp has questioned Howick's sincerity in making this comment, pointing out that it was an occasion that demanded pleasantries, and that Howick had had bitter relationships

¹⁴ T.F.Elliot, *The Progress of Emigration and Contrast of New Colonies with Old*, 1850, enclosed in Elliot papers, MS 19432.

¹⁵ This is discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

¹⁶ Bloomfield, *Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, p.122. Bloomfield gives no reference to the source of this detail.

¹⁷ *Hansard*, 3rd series, xlvi, pp. 898-9.

¹⁸ *Morning Chronicle*, 3 May, 1841. This article has been extensively quoted by historians: see for example, Mills, *Colonization*, p. 167.

with the colonial reformers during the previous decade.¹⁹ There is some validity in this statement, but additional evidence indicates that no matter what Howick's opinion was of Wakefield on a personal level, his theory did hold sway with Howick. In 1831 he informed Wakefield that he would be 'most happy to receive any further information or suggestions from a person who has shown so much knowledge of the subject to which they relate'. Howick suggested that Wakefield should submit further written information and details for consideration by Goderich and the government, which, Howick assured him, would receive 'the attention to which they are so well entitled'.²⁰ Yet this is a long way from Thornton's assessment, in which he argued that it was at the National Colonization Society's 'insistence' that Howick persuaded Goderich to introduce the Ripon Regulations.²¹ Thornton produced no evidence to support this statement. Howick was open to persuasive argument, but he was certainly not the sort of minister or man to whom one could dictate or intimidate.

So Elliot's assessment of events become important. He was unequivocal. He affirmed that

the Merit of suggesting the Scheme of selling Lands, and applying the Proceeds to Emigration, was due to Mr. Wakefield. What the Government did was, within less than Two years of the very first Hint of the Theory in his earliest Publication, and indeed in less than a Twelve month after it was proposed in any formal Shape, heartily to Adopt and carry out the Suggestion.²²

¹⁹ Philipp, 'Wakefieldian Influence', pp. 173-80.

²⁰ Howick to Wakefield, 7 September, 1831, Grey papers, GRE/V/C1.

²¹ Thornton, *Philosophical Radicals*, p. 21.

²² Report of the Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, *B.P.P.* 1847 (737) VI, p. 460.

If this was indeed was an accurate assessment of circumstances surrounding the introduction of the regulations, why was Wakefield so disapproving and censorious? The case is certainly not clear-cut.

Despite Howick's empathy with Wakefield's theory, the significance of the contribution of other circumstances becomes apparent when trying to establish the influences at work in the changes in land policy. Philipp, in her examination of Wakefieldian influence in New South Wales, argued that having understood the need for change, the Colonial Office took several factors into account. Pointing to the confusion of regulations that existed in the late 1820s and the complaints and petitions received from colonists and Governor Darling, Philipp argued that the situation had become impossible and that a change of land regulation had already been decided upon. Furthermore, she concluded that the changes appeared to have been largely a result of merely applying common sense to the situation.²³ While Philipp admitted that Wakefieldian influence could not be denied, she believed that the influence of the colonial reformers was 'essentially general in character'. What some historians have identified as Wakefieldian influence, she argued, was merely the results of 'Colonial Office procedure'.

But historiography evolves; debates and discussions move on. In a later reassessment of her original work, Philipp acknowledged that her previous conclusion regarding Wakefieldian influence was 'mistaken'. Using additional sources, in particular the Grey papers, she examined in greater depth the relationship between Howick and Wakefield, and Howick's role in introducing policy changes during his period as Under-Secretary during the early 1830s.

²³ Land systems in the U.S.A. and British North America were also put forward as being influential in the policy changes for the Australian colonies.

Philipp did not put forward a coherent or explicit conclusion. But she implies that Wakefield's influence penetrated imperial thinking about empire and policy-making during the early years of the 2nd Earl Grey's Whig government, and that Wakefield's ability to achieve this was due to Howick benefiting from and being influenced by 'the great view of things' provided by Wakefield.²⁴

Clearly the influence of Wakefield and his followers cannot be ignored. But it is apparent that the regulations and policy concerning land sales and emigration, which were introduced and developed throughout the 1830s and 40s, took part of their detailed shape from other sources. Otherwise, Wakefield and the colonial reformers would not have been so vocal and persistent in their criticism of the Colonial Office during this period. In seeking to establish other influences at work in policies for land sales and emigration, attention must be directed towards Elliot. As has been revealed, he was a key figure from the earliest days of approaches from the colonial reformers to Howick, Goderich and the Colonial Office. He played the role of intermediary when Wakefield approached Howick. He was secretary to the Emigration Commissioners of 1831 and when they were dismissed in 1832, it was Elliot who took over responsibility for emigration. This position allowed Elliot a considerable degree of freedom and discretion with regard to emigration policy.²⁵ His later roles as Agent-General for Emigration and chairman of the CLEC reinforced his ascendancy. Admittedly, while Stephen was at the Colonial Office, much was sanctioned by him, but it has been shown that Elliot still held sufficient sway to stamp his own mark on policies for developing the colonies.

²⁴ J. Philipp, *A Great View of Things: Edward Gibbon Wakefield* (Melbourne, 1971).

²⁵ This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

The *Colonial Gazette* appeared to have thought along these lines. Many of its articles, the majority of which would have been written by Wakefield, singled out Elliot for personal criticism. There can be little doubt that the censure directed at Elliot at the time of the *Durham Report* originated from Wakefield.²⁶ The direct nature of the criticism indicates a reaction from Wakefield that suggests he identified Elliot as one of the major obstacles to unreserved acceptance of his theories. Wakefield and other colonial reformers accepted that the system for disposal of waste land and promotion of emigration was founded on the principles of their economic theory, but were convinced that the 'official method of giving effect to those principles was really calculated to defeat them'. Wakefield declared that they were 'much dissatisfied with the awkward workmanship of Lord Howick and the Colonial Office upon materials which we believed to deserve more careful and skilful handling'.²⁷ Following Howick's departure from the Colonial Office much of the criticism fell on Elliot and Stephen.

Wakefield continued to complain that the details of his theories had been ignored. It was these details, which he considered so important for effective systematic colonization. This familiar cry of Wakefield and his supporters of being misunderstood and unfairly abused has been described as a 'standard technique' that they used to generate controversy and public interest in their schemes and theories.²⁸ Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Wakefieldians worked to maintain a high profile in order to promote their theories and expose the deficiencies they felt were present in current policies for colonization. Supporters

²⁶ This is dealt with in Chapter 6.

²⁷ Wakefield, *Colonization*, p. 46.

²⁸ Burroughs, *Britain and Australia 1831-1855*, pp. 180-1.

who were members of parliament worked to raise the profile of systematic colonization in the House of Commons. Such members included Buller, Sir Francis Burdett, J.A. Roebuck, Molesworth and Henry Warburton and they attempted untiringly to wring changes and reform for colonial land policy from government ministries. Propaganda featured prominently in their approach, favouring widespread distribution of pamphlets, articles in the *Spectator*, the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Colonial Gazette*, parliamentary speeches, and as witnesses before select committees.²⁹ This last medium they were able to use to consider effect. Wakefieldians dominated the membership of these committees, with the final reports reflecting their views.³⁰ There was of course no guarantee that the government would accept and implement recommendations of these reports, but the select committee offered an opportunity for Philosophic Radicals grounded in Benthamite doctrine to gain public attention for their opinions and proposals.

Elliot continued to be the target of attacks in the *Colonial Gazette*. In one such article he was described as ‘a mere creature of the [Colonial] Office...with a marked unfitness for the business of colonization’.³¹ Following the establishment of the CLEC in 1840 and Elliot’s appointment as chairman, reference was made to what the theorists³² considered to be Elliot’s ‘muddling emigration-work’.³³ Much of the censure was general in character about Elliot’s or his department’s

²⁹ Two notable examples are: the Select Committee on the question of the disposal of colonial waste lands in Australia, the Cape of Good Hope and the West Indies, 1836; the Select Committee on Transportation, 1837.

³⁰ Burroughs, *Britain and Australia*, pp. 190-1.

³¹ *Colonial Gazette*, 29 Jan. 1840.

³² Wakefield was the main contributor of these types of articles in the *Colonial Gazette*.

³³ *Colonial Gazette*, 19 Feb. 1840.

faults. But criticism of Elliot appears to have intensified and become more specific following the *Durham Report* and the establishment of the CLEC.

Before the names of the Commissioners were made public the *Colonial Gazette's* comments were favourable about the new body. The newspaper considered the CLEC to be 'a real benefit to the public – a large stride made by the Government towards a sound system of general colonization'.³⁴ After the Commissioners' names had been released however, the *Colonial Gazette* described the Commission as a 'worse than good-for-nothing trick of the Colonial Office'. The article noted the 'effects' of the new arrangements. It observed that it had made a 'comfortable seat for Mr. Elliot. That on which he has hitherto reclined, pretty much at his ease, was slipping from under him. A progressive decrease in the Emigration Fund of New South Wales threatened to deprive him of all his duties, and his salary.' The writer then went on to attack Elliot's previous record of managing emigration accusing him of being 'miserably inefficient'. Particular reference was made to Pinnock's complaints about the quality of emigrants selected under the Government System and the mortality rates among government emigrants.³⁵ Imperial historians are well acquainted with the criticism that the colonial reformers directed at Stephen, and in particular the bitter resentment Stephen felt over the way he was treated by the colonial reformers, especially Charles Buller. Elliot's dealings with the colonial reformers have received less attention. As the permanent official responsible for assisted emigration, Elliot was an obvious target for censure from the theorists who had

³⁴ *Colonial Gazette*, 1 Jan. 1840.

³⁵ *Colonial Gazette*, 29 Jan. 1840.

advocated more well-regulated and well-supervised emigration policy, with greater conformity to Wakefield's theory.

Elliot's correspondence reveals that he did not take to heart the expressions of disapproval and reproof emanating from Wakefield and the theorists. Unlike Stephen, whose correspondence revealed the resentment he harboured over the criticism directed at him from the colonial reformers,³⁶ Elliot appears to have remained emotionally detached from the reproaches and rebukes directed towards him. This may well indicate that he had some empathy and understanding with their cause.

This does not mean, however, that Elliot refrained from answering his critics or attempting to justify the colonial policy he was administering at that particular time. As a permanent official, Elliot was not free to answer his critics directly; only the Secretary of State was able to defend attacks on Colonial Office procedures and policies. But there were ways in which civil servants and ministers could circumvent the restrictions imposed on them. One way was to enclose letters or dispatches in published parliamentary papers. These letters and dispatches would include reference to and defence of particular attacks upon either themselves or their administrative capabilities. Another effective method was to publish an official pamphlet concerning an element of government policy, and use this as a platform to mount an indirect defence against criticisms of his and his Department's work. An appearance as a witness before select committees was a further medium which Elliot manipulated in order to defend emigration policy.

³⁶ See, for example, Stephen's correspondence in the Stephen papers; Grey papers and Stanley papers.

Elliot used these methods to good effect. In his pamphlet on the progress of emigration, he took the opportunity to address a number of issues. First, he pointed to the 'common sense' that was required in populating new colonies such as those in Australia. He emphasized the need to send 'only moderate numbers' of emigrants until the foundations have been laid for an infrastructure which could then absorb greater numbers of labourers. Referring directly to the complaint 'that colonization is a lost art',³⁷ he reported that three of the most prosperous settlements 'which perhaps were ever formed within the same period' had been created during the previous ten or twelve years. Elliot used the experiences of the colony of South Australia as a 'striking example' of the success of government emigration policy. He acknowledged that the colony was founded by 'a body of gentlemen who deserve the credit of having directed public enterprise to a new part of Australia and of having sent out a very respectable body of settlers'. But Elliot described how during the first four years the colony failed to prosper and that the imperial government had found it necessary to announce that the colony was bankrupt. Although the founders of South Australia had blamed the government for the financial problems of the colony, Elliot pointed out that under the Act of Parliament, the South Australia Company had the sole responsibility for its direction and policy and that 'in no respect were their wishes interfered with by the Colonial Office'. Upon the government assuming charge of the colony, the finances of the colony were stabilised and balanced and it 'expanded...into early and lasting prosperity'.

As South Australia was the colony specifically ascribed to Wakefield and his followers, this was a pertinent and valid debating point for Elliot. It was an

³⁷ This is a reference to Wakefield's *The Art of Colonization*.

opportunity to expose the weaknesses in Wakefield's theory by focusing on the early failing of the colony. Admittedly, by this time Wakefield had distanced himself from South Australia, but nonetheless, in defending his own position, Elliot was able to expose the fragility of founding a colony on 'speculation' and ambiguous theories.³⁸

Moreover, there were, Elliot declared, people who were anxious to perpetuate bad feeling in relation to colonial administration. This was undoubtedly a reference to Wakefield and some of his supporters. Elliot accused them of continually 'shifting their ground' and consistently refusing to give any credit of the success of colonization to the Colonial Office. Elliot complained that all the evil which may have occurred was blamed upon the Colonial Office, while all the good was attributed to the private parties.

As has been seen, much of the criticism had been directed at the class and quality of emigrants, and Elliot resisted these charges vigorously. He stressed that government could exercise no direct control over emigration: 'we cannot compel those who are comfortable at home to go;- we cannot compel those who are starving, not to go'. It was for these reasons that the 'distressed swarm out in great multitudes', and that those who were in better circumstances go in much more moderate numbers.³⁹

Select committees were used with equal effect in countering criticism. The degree of success in using a select committee for such purposes, of course, relied to a great extent on the inclusion and phrasing of specific questions. With

³⁸ For a detailed account of the founding and subsequent financial problems of South Australia see D. Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*.

³⁹ T.F.Elliot, *Progress of Emigration and Contrast of new colonies with old* (July, 1848; postscript added 1850).

the appropriate enquiry, Elliot could reply with opportune answers, which defended past policy and championed current or future practices. Much therefore depended on the choice of Chairman. In the case of the Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, Elliot's old chief, and friend, Monteagle was in the chair. Not surprisingly the questions posed gave Elliot every opportunity to defend himself against his handling of emigration – particularly passenger protection – and accusations that government emigration should be more 'systematic'. This was platform from which to address his critics.

Elliot's tenets

These counter-attacks and defence of the Colonial Office's and his own position should not be taken as indicators that Elliot rejected or had no sympathy with Wakefieldian theory or the views of the theorists of 1830 in general. From his early years in the Colonial Office, he had enjoyed the company of many of those who ranked amongst the group of philosophical radicals from whom the colonial reformers had emerged. He referred to the 'great merit' of Wakefield's proposal that public lands in the colonies should be disposed of only by sale and that the funds should finance emigration.⁴⁰ Elliot went so far as to describe Wakefield's scheme as not only the best known, but also the 'most able'.⁴¹ The procedures and practices that Elliot introduced and developed undoubtedly attempted to rationalize and organize the government-assisted emigration system into a systematic form, which went some way along the road of Wakefield's

⁴⁰ T.F.Elliot, *Progress of Emigration and Contrast of new colonies with old* (July, 1848; postscript added 1850).

⁴¹ Report of the Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, *B.P.P.* 1847 (737) VI, p. 460, Q.4385.

vision for colonization. Elliot recalled that ‘in Australia, the new System took effect immediately, and with the most beneficial Consequences’.⁴² And it is here that the paradox arises. On the one hand, Elliot was criticized by the Theorists of 1830 for his shortcomings in the administration of emigration and systematic colonization. On the other, he has been identified by historians as being responsible for putting into practice the principles of the colonial radicals.⁴³ Attempting to overcome this apparent inconsistency entails examining Elliot’s formative intellectual influences, in order to attempt to identify evidence which might reveal his philosophical leanings.

Elliot’s private papers provide revealing insights into the early influences which shaped his reasoning and opinions. He felt himself fortunate to have experienced the contrast of India and England at such an early age. He recalled that ‘the early habituation to such different customs taught liberality, and the novelty, first of India, and afterwards of England, forced reflection at an age when many are still in the Nursery’. While in India he studied ancient languages and was largely self taught.⁴⁴ While he delighted in the experiences of his early education, he felt his time at Harrow was wasted - ‘all I learned was to know the Boys’. His career in the Colonial Office however offered the opportunity to broaden and indulge his intellectual interests.

It was in the environment of Whitehall that he came into contact with young colleagues who had interests in political economy and philosophical radicalism. These friendships drew him into the inner circles of political

⁴² Report of the Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland, 1847, *B.P.P. (737)* VI, p. 460, Q. 4388.

⁴³ Thornton, *Philosophical Radicals*, p. 21; Morrell, *Colonial Policy*, p. 13.

⁴⁴ Notes by Elliot headed ‘the circumstances by which my mind was formed’, n.d. July 1828, Elliot papers, 19432/176.

economists, philosophical radicals and the disciples of Bentham. Elliot's family connections, together with his influential colleagues and other prominent figures, ensured that the doors of intellectual and as well as élite society were open to him. It was a society that was relatively intimate and exclusive, where Elliot was able to develop a network of personal contacts and experiment with philosophical ideas and theories. In 1825, the year he joined the Colonial Office, he read Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which he declared opened up a new world to him. Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* was his next inspiration. It 'emancipated' him, and he believed it taught him his 'rights as a rational creature; and from that day...I have thought for myself'. Although he read many works after Smith and Locke, he was adamant that none had affected his 'understanding' so much as these two books. The relationship between Elliot's intellectual experiences and the demands of his career are crucial to the understanding of his position regarding his attitude to administration and bureaucracy of government-directed emigration and systematic colonization.⁴⁵

Those with whom Elliot could claim a close relationship included some of the foremost philosophical radicals of the day. John Stuart Mill and Elliot had formed an acquaintance while they were both junior officials in administrative service; Mill at India House and Elliot at the Colonial Office. Along with other friends and colleagues they breakfasted and dined together; met at the various meetings of learned, philosophical and literary societies and mingled at social

⁴⁵ Notes by Elliot headed 'the circumstances by which my mind was formed', n.d. July 1828, Elliot papers, 19432/176.

functions.⁴⁶ Mill's early influences were drawn from a utilitarian education and background, but he kept an open mind to other theoretical influences.⁴⁷ As an administrator he was conscious of the practical aspects of nineteenth-century government bureaucracy. This was something both he and Elliot had in common. Thomas noted that with young men of his own age, Mill's mastery of subjects in which they were mere beginners made him an intellectual guide rather than a social companion. Mill's response to his companions was often to enrol them in an essay society where they read papers for their mutual improvement.⁴⁸ Mill's works became fashionable in Cambridge and formed a school of 'Cambridge Benthamites' which included Charles Austin and the Villiers brothers,⁴⁹ all of whom were on intimate terms with Elliot.

Mill was a member of Wakefield's circle of friends and an advocate of his theory for systematic colonization.⁵⁰ He was also a member of the National Colonization Society⁵¹, the South Australia Association⁵² and came out strongly in support of the *Durham Report*. Mill made known his views on colonization in his own works. Colonization, he believed, 'in the present state of the world, is the very best affair of business, in which the capital of an old and wealthy country can possibly engage'. He also argued that only the Government or some 'combination

⁴⁶ See for example, Mill to Chadwick, 12 April 1827, Francis E. Mineka, (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. xii, *The Earlier Letters of John Stuart Mill 1812-1848*, p. 17; Mill to Carlyle, 30 June 1837, *ibid*, pp. 339-41; printed paper on the Sterling Club, n.d., Elliot papers, MS 19432.

⁴⁷ Alan Ryan, 'Utilitarianism and bureaucracy', in Sutherland (ed.), *Growth of nineteenth-century government*, pp. 33-62.

⁴⁸ Thomas, *Philosophic Radicals*, p. 156. It is possible that Elliot's memoir, 'The circumstances by which my mind was formed', Elliot papers, MS 19432 (176), was written to present at one of these gatherings.

⁴⁹ Thomas, *Philosophic Radicals*, p. 451.

⁵⁰ Mills, *Colonization*, p. 144.

⁵¹ A list of the members of the society is given in E.G. Wakefield, *England and America* vol.ii (1834), fn. p. 161.

⁵² Thornton, *Philosophical Radicals*, p. 21.

of individuals in complete understanding with the Government' could undertake colonization on a large scale and that it must be financed 'by others than the labourers themselves'.⁵³ Elliot undoubtedly held Mill in high esteem and valued his opinion. For example, he wrote to Mill about his thoughts on the Australian coolie immigration question and informed Mill he would welcome any advice on the topic.⁵⁴ It seems safe to conclude therefore that Mill was particularly influential with Elliot.

It was through his friendship with Mill that Elliot was introduced to Thomas Carlyle, with whom he also struck up a close friendship. Carlyle described Elliot as a 'very clever and friendly young man...he is one of my Lecture people, and likes me very well'.⁵⁵ Carlyle was referring to a small group of his friends who convinced him that, instead of going to America to lecture,⁵⁶ he might just as successfully lecture in London. The group, who included Elliot, Henry Taylor, Harriet Martineau, and others, organized a programme of six lectures.⁵⁷ Carlyle was no convert to philosophical radicalism, but he had a keen interest in emigration. In response to a request to be one of a deputation to the Colonial Office regarding a request for help for workers in Paisley to emigrate, he stated clearly his belief that governments need to

set on foot an organised continuous *System of Emigration*...And I think he will be a right noble Minister of State, and have deserved well of his

⁵³ Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, vol.ii, pp. 540-42.

⁵⁴ Elliot to Mill, 4 Dec. 1837, CO 386/21.

⁵⁵ Carlyle to Alexander [Alick] Carlyle, 14 Mar. 1839, Edwin W. Marris, Jr. (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, pp. 457-9.

⁵⁶ Carlyle had been invited by Emerson to visit Boston.

⁵⁷ Carlyle to A. Carlyle, 5 Mar. 1837, Marris, *Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, pp. 416-20.

country, who...in spite of impediments, contrives to plant the germ of such an Emigration System-the sooner the better.⁵⁸

Carlyle's correspondence reveals that emigration was a topic on which he and Elliot regularly had discussion or communication. Carlyle had occasion to ask Elliot for help with an assisted passage for one of his brother's acquaintances.⁵⁹ His interest in the Agent-General's work led Carlyle to accompany Elliot to Gravesend to see 'certain Kentish Australian emigrants' who were setting sail for New South Wales.⁶⁰

Despite Carlyle's penchant for abusing exponents of utilitarian philosophy,⁶¹ he counted Philosophical Radicals among his friends. His former pupil was Charles Buller. They maintained a close relationship until Buller's death. Taking into consideration the relationship of Carlyle and Buller, and that of Carlyle and Elliot, it would seem reasonable to assume that Buller and Elliot would have moved in the same circles. In addition, the likes of Thackeray, the Brookfields, Grotes and Merivale were all intimate with both Buller and Elliot. There appears to be no firm evidence that can throw light on the nature of their relationship. Their paths had crossed at Harrow in 1821 for a brief period,⁶² but there is nothing to suggest that Buller and Elliot were close friends. It is significant, however, that no matter how strongly or how publicly Buller criticized Stephen and the Colonial Office, there is no indication that he singled out Elliot for disapproval.

⁵⁸ Carlyle to Simpson, 19 July 1840, *ibid.*, pp. 202-3.

⁵⁹ Carlyle to A. Carlyle, 14 March 1839, Marris (ed.), *Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, pp. 457-9.

⁶⁰ Carlyle to Sterling, 18 June 1838, Carlyle to Ricketts, 18 June 1838, Carlyle to Aitken, 6 July, 1838, *ibid.*, pp. 106-115. The emigrants were sailing on the *Coromandel*, a bounty ship. It arrived in New South Wales on 2 Oct. 1838. During the journey Carlyle fell and injured both wrists, which affected his writing.

⁶¹ Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*, p. 2.

⁶² Harrow School register, 1820/1.

William Makepeace Thackeray was a regular visitor to the Elliot home.⁶³ This relationship is particularly significant as Thackeray moved within the inner circle of the philosophical radicals. He was a close friend of George Grote, Molesworth and Buller and drew Elliot further into this exclusive intellectual environment.⁶⁴ Finer noted that there was a ‘distinct “Grote clique” and that others formed their own ‘salons’.⁶⁵ Elliot’s home at Chesham Place was certainly a noted ‘salon’ amongst his circle of friends.

Political economist Nassau Senior was another of Elliot’s close friends and confidants. Their friendship lasted over several decades and Elliot was a frequent visitor to the Senior home.⁶⁶ Senior was another influential figure from Benthamite circles, although Finer suggested that there was some query to the extent of his Utilitarian leanings.⁶⁷ Senior’s interest in emigration had been apparent from his earliest dealings with the Poor Law. Conversations recorded by Senior in his journals reveal that he and Elliot discussed many aspects of government administration. From his early days as a junior clerk, Elliot had looked to Senior for guidance and counsel.

What, then, do these relationships reveal about Elliot’s intellectual influences? In his essay on the mechanisms which aided the transmission of Benthamite ideas, Finer advised that the importance of the ‘salon’ and specialist societies during the period 1820-50 must not be underestimated as a source for the

⁶³ The Elliots and Kate Perry were confidants of Thackeray in connection with his intimate relationship with Mrs. Jane O. Brookfield, wife of the Reverend William Brookfield.

⁶⁴ See Ray (ed.), *Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*; Harden (ed.), *Letters and Private Papers: a supplement*.

⁶⁵ Finer, ‘Transmission of Benthamite ideas’, pp. 11-32 at p.14.

⁶⁶ After the death of his first wife Elliot proposed to Senior’s daughter (later Mrs. Simpson). His proposal was rejected. See Brooke to Senior, 29 Apr. 1862 Senior papers E438; also Brooke to Simpson 23 Feb. 1880, Senior papers E558.

⁶⁷ Finer, ‘Transmission of Benthamite ideas’, p. 16.

'irradiation' of such ideas.⁶⁸ It was in these salons that 'small knots of Benthamites attracted...a much wider circle of men whom they infected with some of their enthusiasms' thereby turning them into 'Second-degree Benthamites'.⁶⁹ Furthermore, he suggested that in the process of 'permeation' of ideas the appointment of Benthamites to key positions in the civil service brought opportunities for infiltration of radical philosophical ideas. He argued that these appointments resulted in a two-fold effect. First, the offices in which the appointments were made became a springboard for further inquiry and 'suscitation'. Second, the new administrators became associated very closely with the decision-making in their general offices. These administrators, Finer argued, were 'positively encouraged to suggest to their minister the further measures that their office seemed to call for'.

As a final point, Finer suggested that during the 1830s there was tendency for Benthamites, once they had achieved official positions, to recommend persons for filling vacancies in their offices. These people would be 'persons of their [the officials'] own way of thinking'.⁷⁰

Elliot would seem to fit in comfortably with Finer's system of mechanisms. He moved within the appropriate philosophical circles; his swift promotion within the Colonial Office during the 1830s put him in an influential position as Chairman of the CLEC. He was involved in the decision-making process at an early stage in the schemes for assisted-emigration and his influence with ministers, especially Howick, Spring Rice and Stanley, was undeniable. Elliot was also successful in recruiting clerks of his choice.

⁶⁸ Finer, 'Transmission of Benthamite ideas', pp. 11-32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷⁰ Finer, 'Transmission of Benthamite ideas', p. 18.

But these factors do not prove that Elliot was influenced solely by Benthamite ideas or that he attempted to translate such ideas into principles for the systematic colonization of Australia. It must also be remembered that Elliot counted among his friends those who were not sympathetic to Benthamism. Finer was at pains to argue that while the main aim of his essay was to establish the means by which Bentham's ideas were transmitted to those who were able to put them into effect, he was not claiming that Benthamite reform was more than part of administrative and social reconstruction that went on during the early nineteenth century. He recognized that other influences contributed to the reform process.

MacDonagh's model for bureaucratic and legislative change was empirical in essence and rejected doctrinaire influences. Administrative change was identified as being the outcome of the pressure of events and crises. Abuses and deficiencies were uncovered; initial remedies were ineffective and more effective policies and legislation were introduced. MacDonagh described a cumulative process that was more collectivist in nature and one in which 'humanitarianism' had a role to play. MacDonagh asserted that the 'overwhelming majority of public servants' were not influenced by Benthamism. Only men like Chadwick and Stephen made a 'genuinely Benthamic contribution'.⁷¹ But as Parris asserted, one Chadwick counted for more than the hundreds of rank and file public servants.⁷² More significantly, MacDonagh concluded that passenger regulation developed 'without the faintest spur from Benthamism'.⁷³ But where does Elliot stand in this

⁷¹ MacDonagh, 'Nineteenth Century Revolution', pp. 65.

⁷² H. Parris, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: a Reappraisal Reappraised', *The Historical Journal*, iii (1960), pp. 17-37.

⁷³ O. MacDonagh, 'The Regulation of the Emigrant Traffic from the United Kingdom, 1842-55', *Irish Historical Studies*, ix (1954-5), p. 163.

assessment? MacDonagh placed him in the ranks of the 'Philosophical Whigs', but failed to produce evidence to support this declaration. Certainly MacDonagh's assessment of Elliot's role and contribution to the development of passenger protection and regulation was ambivalent. He considered Elliot's influence to have been significant in the development of emigrant regulation, yet he asserted that 'no celebrated public servant was concerned with its workings'.⁷⁴ He suggested that the history of the emigration corps provided an example of "pure" administrative change...free from powerful outside pressures, free...from men of extraordinary penetration or intelligence'.⁷⁵ Elliot's role and influence cannot be put aside so readily. It was Elliot's hand that guided the information gathering and the legislation. His link with the philosophic radicals cannot be ignored. Neither can the pressure and propaganda of colonial reformers such as Wakefield, Buller and Durham.

Nevertheless, MacDonagh's interpretation of the growth of nineteenth-century government administration has been invaluable in stimulating further research and debate about the 'revolution in government'.⁷⁶ Dunkley sought to test the extent to which state involvement in emigration protection was consistent with the MacDonagh model, and to reveal whether emigration administration was an apt example of the hidden pattern and self momentum of nineteenth-century administrative change. He concentrated on emigration to British North America

⁷⁴ O. MacDonagh, 'Emigration and the state, 1833-55: an essay in administrative history', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, v (1955) pp. 133-59.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ See for example, J. Hart, 'Nineteenth-century social reform; a Tory interpretation of history', *Past and Present*, 31 (1965), Parris, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government' (1960); A. Heesom, 'The Coal Mines Act of 1842, Social Reform and Social Control', *The Historical Journal*, 24 (1981) pp.69-88; W.C. Lubenow, *The Politics of Government Growth: Early Victorian Attitudes Toward State Intervention 1833-1848* (Newton Abbot and Hamden, 1971); P. Dunkley, 'Emigration and the State, 1803-1842: the Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, 23, ii (1980), pp. 353-80.

and argued validly that MacDonagh had failed to consider motivation from within the Colonial Office. Dunkley claimed that the main impetus came from the influence of Buchanan and Horton. He rejected any positive influence from Elliot, suggesting that Elliot had an 'ingrained mis-trust of state-action [sic]' and that he had repeatedly 'thrown his influence against the department's growing involvement in emigrant protection'.⁷⁷ But Dunkley has misrepresented the evidence. The testimony cited for this assessment of Elliot's attitude is from the first half of 1832. As has been noted previously, at this time, Elliot was well aware of the need for further action, but he recognised that that the political climate was not conducive to putting forward regulative legislation.⁷⁸ It was not his aversion to state intervention that prompted Elliot's response, but his perception of what would be acceptable to Parliamentary opinion at that time.

Dunkley also turned his attention to the question of the place of Benthamite ideas in the making of policy for the emigration service.⁷⁹ He identified Stephen as admiring Benthamite methods, but does not go as far as Knapplund who firmly classified Stephen as a Benthamite. He also argued that Alexander C. Buchanan,⁸⁰ whom he believed to be particularly influential in furthering legislation for emigrant protection, had 'substantial and intimate contact with the world of Benthamism'. While he admitted that his evidence of Benthamite influence is circumstantial, he concluded that the close relationship

⁷⁷ P. Dunkley, 'Emigration and the State, 1803-1842: the Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, 23, ii (1980), pp. 353-80 at p. 371.

⁷⁸ This is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 5.

⁷⁹ Dunkley uses the phrases 'emigration service' and 'emigrant protection' interchangeably. Administration of emigrant protection and passenger regulation was merely part of the 'emigration service', which had other responsibilities including co-ordination of recruitment and selection. MacDonagh's model was formulated from research undertaken on emigrant protection alone, not the entire emigration service.

⁸⁰ Government immigration agent in British North America.

that existed between those who prompted the intellectual foundations of contemporary assumptions about the method of government and those who administered the government policy could not be precluded. However, Dunkley has overlooked or simply ignored Elliot's intellectual inclinations. This is perhaps understandable as he appears not to have had access to Elliot's private papers, from which his social and philosophical network is revealed. Of course, as Dunkley conceded, social contacts with those of Benthamite leanings are purely circumstantial evidence. Therefore other available evidence must be examined. There are some revealing traits in Elliot's methods and policy, which are useful in identifying aspects of his philosophical leanings.

Elliot's approach to administration of government-assisted emigration was distinguishable by his tendency to adhere to free trade principles. This was especially apparent in his dealing with entrepreneurs within the shipping trade. He was sensitive to the need to keep government interference to a minimum, so that passage costs were kept as low as possible. The effectiveness of government-directed emigration relied on Elliot's department being able to negotiate affordable passage fares as the cost of migration to Australia was relatively high. This feature of Elliot's attitude was especially noticeable in his handling of passenger protection and regulation legislation.⁸¹ It has been suggested that there existed a 'complex interrelationship' between private enterprise and government that could be linked to ideologies and theorists, and that in this way private enterprise could influence government policy.⁸² Whether Elliot's *laissez-faire* ethics owed their origin solely to Smith's influence or to that of the Philosophic

⁸¹ This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, above.

⁸² F. Broeze, 'Private Enterprise and the Peopling of Australasia', p. 236.

Radicals is unclear. The latter did not confine themselves to the thought of Bentham and his disciples, they looked to others for inspiration including Smith, Malthus, Ricardo among others. As Thomas noted, philosophical radicalism embraced a variegated skein of ideas.⁸³

Elliot's interest in education, however, might well be interpreted as Benthamite in origin. Finer argued that any Benthamite was automatically an educationist.⁸⁴ Elliot set great store by ensuring emigrants, particularly children, received education during the passage to Australia and that adequate supplies of books and educational material were available on board the emigrant ships.⁸⁵ His request for the supply of a library for the *Bussorah Merchant* emigrant ship was typical of the arrangements Elliot undertook to ensure onboard tuition for emigrants.⁸⁶ School teachers were also recruited for the passage and were allowed a reduced or free passage. Where no professional school teacher was available, a suitably educated emigrant was paid to teach children and adult emigrants. Elliot's instructions to school teachers reflect the attention he gave to detail in this matter.⁸⁷ This desire on Elliot's part to promote education could possibly have been in response to colonial criticism about the quality of assisted emigrants. But Elliot's involvement with the promotion of education for the poorer classes is evident outside the confines of colonial administration. His first wife, Jane, ran a school for 300 'neglected children' where she 'with the help of other kind souls' fed, taught and clothed them – thus 'preparing them in some

⁸³ Thomas, *Philosophic Radicals*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ S.E. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (London, 1952), p. 150.

⁸⁵ See for example, Elliot to Fry, n.d. 1837, CO 384/33; Elliot to Keble, 22 Mar 1839, CO 386/22; Elliot to Nisbett & CO, 31 July 1839, CO 386/23. See also Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, pp. 174-8. Haines discussed the provision of educational literature in relation to philanthropy and the literacy of emigrants.

⁸⁶ Elliot to Secretary, Religious Tract Society, 22 Mar. 1839, CO 386/22.

⁸⁷ Instruction for school teachers are included in Appendix 8.

degree to fight the battle of life'. Elliot was very supportive of his wife's venture.⁸⁸ While not conclusive evidence, Elliot's attitude to education for those from the poorer sections of society is compatible with Benthamite thought.

Finally, there remains the attention Elliot gave to developing further expertise, efficiency and centralisation during the administration of emigration. The value and emphasis he placed on investigations and statistical analysis, especially in his dealings with the Passenger Acts are further evidence which suggest that he may have had Benthamite leanings.

An assessment of the degree to which Elliot was influenced by Benthamite principles and Wakefieldian theories cannot be complete without reference to the inconsistencies within the philosophy of the philosophical radicals and the lack of clarity within the theories of the colonial reformers. As Thomas noted Philosophical Radical is a term for a group which 'embraced men of a wide variety of opinions...but it does not insist that those principles were identical with the philosophy of Bentham'.⁸⁹ He suggested the Philosophic Radicals 'preached a doctrine which was in many ways perplexed and contradictory'.⁹⁰ Antithetical ideas resulted in discordant principles on the reform of the system of emigration. Philosophical radicals were ardent believers in laissez faire, free trade and individualism while at the same time adherents of active state direction of

⁸⁸ 'Kate Perry's recollections of Mr. Thackeray', J.O. Brookfield (ed.), *A Collection of Letters of W.M. Thackeray 1847-1855: with portraits and reproductions of letters and drawings* (London, 2nd edition, 1887), p. 180. Kate Perry was Jane Elliot's sister. In several of Thackeray's letters he writes of the Elliot's 'children' or the 'children's mama and papa'. The Elliot's had no children of their own, and Thackeray is undoubtedly referring to the children of the school. Harden has transcribed the name of the school as Jones' school, but it was probably called Jane's School, see Thackeray to Elliot, 11 Jan. 1861, Harden (ed.) *The Letters and Private Papers: A supplement*, p. 1014.

⁸⁹ Thomas, *Philosophic Radicals*, p. 3.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

human affairs in the form of paternal humanitarianism.⁹¹ Bentham's attitude on emigration was not consistent. He was opposed to imperialism as he felt it worked against laissez-faire. He identified colonial governments as 'strongholds of aristocratic privilege, corruption and jobbery'. Yet he also identified state emigration to colonies as philanthropic ventures which could absorb the excess population of Great Britain.⁹²

Although the majority of the Philosophical Radicals were supporters of Wakefield's theory, there were exceptions, notably the politician John Arthur Roebuck and John Bowring, editor of the *Westminster Review*. Bowring described Wakefield's theory as the 'day dreams of an ingenuous man'.⁹³ Even Wakefield's staunchest disciples identified flaws within his theories. Mill expressed his frustration that Wakefield had never taken the opportunity to draw his theory together into a more coherent form. He wrote,

I have long regretted that there does not exist a systematic treatise in a permanent form, from your hand and with your name, in which the whole subject of Colonization is treated, as the express subject of the book – so as to become at once the authoritative book on the subject. At present people have to pick up your doctrines, both thematical and practical.⁹⁴

Wakefield's theory suffered from lack of clarity and definition and developed from a series of cumulative writings. It can be characterized by what Roberts identified as its 'ever changing form'.⁹⁵ Wakefield was swift to criticize Howick

⁹¹ Thornton, *Philosophical Radicals*, p. 8.

⁹² Ibid, p. 18; Halevy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism* (New York, 1928), p. 114.

⁹³ *Westminster Review*, October 1834, xxi, p. 441; Thornton, *Philosophical Radicalism*, p. 23.

⁹⁴ Mill to Wakefield, n.d., British Library, Add. 36297.

⁹⁵ Stephen H. Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement* (Melbourne, 1924: 1968; London, 1969) p. 84.

and the Colonial Office for setting the price of land at 5s per acre as instructed under the Ripon Regulations, but did not himself suggest any definite sum which he considered appropriate as a 'sufficient price'. This was an issue of which Elliot was particularly critical observing that 'no "sufficient" price can be found'.⁹⁶ This aspect was the crux of Wakefield's whole theory, therefore to be vague about it therefore, weakened his theory considerably.

Even periodicals and newspapers which were known to be biased in favour of the philosophical radicals and Wakefieldian ideas, at times played an ambiguous role in the question of colonial policy and reform. The *Edinburgh Review* was a vehicle for the promotion of Benthamite principles but it was also used to transmit the official Whig view. In an apparent bid to counter the criticisms of Elliot's handling of emigration that had been put forward by the *Colonial Gazette* during 1840, the *Edinburgh Review* sought to expose the weaknesses of Wakefield's theory and emphasize Elliot's skilful handling of emigration. The article pointed out that while Elliot was in Canada with Gosford's Commission, 'things appear to have gone wrong'. In a clear attempt to justify Elliot's handling of government-directed emigration and especially the improvements he had introduced, the *Review* praised Elliot for his 'new arrangements' the results of which had been 'even more favourable than could have been anticipated'.⁹⁷ Clearly then, embracing philosophical radicalism and Benthamism did not necessarily indicate unreserved support for Wakefield and his theory. In the same way, restricted or qualified support or acceptance of

⁹⁶ Report of the Select Committee of Colonization from Ireland, 1847 *B.P.P.* (737) VI, Q. 4391.

⁹⁷ 'New Theory of Colonization', *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 71 1840, in *Emigration in the Victorian Age debates on the issue from 19th century critical journals* (Farnborough, 1973), pp. 517-44.

Wakefield's theory did not denote rejection of Benthamite doctrine or philosophical radicalism.

The most complete and clearest expression of Elliot's opinions about Wakefield's and colonial reformers' repeated calls for systematic colonization was revealed before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland in 1847. As such, it is useful to quote Elliot's words at length. In response to a question concerning the difference between emigration and 'systematic colonization', Elliot pronounced that he thought there was no difference. He remarked,

It is, I believe, a mere Delusion to suppose that there is a something definite called Colonization which is either wilfully or neglectfully set aside. There have indeed been very able Theories propounded under that Name; but, in the first place, they were only applicable to the Colonies like Australia, and not to large Schemes of National Relief; and secondly, I think it can be shown that the whole practicable Part of them has long ago been adopted and carried out. For the present, Emigration seems to be used to mean what actually happens. Colonization to mean anything that would be better. They are mere words of Praise and Blame, from which I see nothing for an impartial Inquirer to learn.⁹⁸

Practical considerations

While it has been suggested that historians should be untangling the philosophical assumptions and opinions of government servants in relation to their

⁹⁸ Report of the Select Committee of Colonization from Ireland 1847 *B.P.P.* (737) VI, p. 459, Q.4383.

work,⁹⁹ Elliot's principles for administration of emigration cannot be explained solely in terms of his intellectual or philosophical connections. Attention must also be directed to the nature of business of the Colonial Office. Each government department had strongly marked individual characteristics. This fact, together with the differing traditions and differing patterns of development in different departments led Sutherland to conclude that government growth in the nineteenth century could not be described as a single phenomenon or process.¹⁰⁰ The Colonial Office had diverse responsibilities, of which emigration was one. When Elliot had assumed responsibility for the day-to-day management of emigration, he had to deal with pressures from a number of sources. And here, the pragmatic dimension of MacDonagh's argument is appealing. There were instances where action needed to be taken urgently to overcome practical problems. The amendment of the Passengers Acts in which Elliot played such an important role are examples of the introduction of legislation or regulations to remedy acute deficiencies.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, the Australian colonies brought their own uniqueness to colonial administration. Convict transportation created and exaggerated problems of numerical sexual imbalance, patterns of settlement and morality. Following the cessation of transportation, the acute shortage of labour demanded a swift and flexible response in terms of emigration policy. The sheer 'tyranny of distance' loomed large in all aspects of administration, but for systematic colonization it was especially significant. Colonial governors, lieutenant-governors and legislative councils were especially vocal in their criticism of aspects of

⁹⁹ Sutherland (ed.), *Studies in the Growth of Government*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰¹ These issues are dealt with in Chapter 4.

emigration policy. Elliot regularly had to defend himself against colonial rebukes, and he was well aware that colonial requirements and preferences needed to be taken into account wherever practicable. Elliot's management of emigration was inevitably shaped by these considerations.

Changing social and economic conditions in Britain were other facets of the emigration picture that Elliot had to handle. These presented Elliot and his staff with particular problems at specific times. Elliot was charged with balancing the benefits to the mother country with those of the colonies. The widespread redundancy of labour and the resulting hardship in Scotland in the early part of Elliot's tenure as Agent-General needed to be addressed. A decade later, the Irish famine demanded swift action in terms of emigration policy. The seasonal nature of agricultural employment presented an ever-present imponderable for Elliot. Prospective emigrants often changed their minds at the last minute, leaving Elliot with an almost empty ship. In cases such as these, suitable emigrants had to be found at short notice and Elliot would by necessity have to be flexible in his interpretation of regulations. It was deviations of this kind that prompted harsh criticism not only from the colonies but also from Wakefield and his followers. Elliot's philosophical background and his appreciation of the value of Wakefield's basic principles influenced his fundamental approach to emigration but it was the practical details with which he and his staff had to deal that shaped the format of government emigration policy.

The colonial reformers' theories were complex and ambitious. Mills claimed that they introduced method and order to the whole process of

colonization.¹⁰² Certainly their basic principles were influential in bringing change to colonial land policy in 1831, and helping to shape colonial policy during the following two decades. But Wakefieldian theory and Benthamite principles alone were not impelling enough nor suitably practical enough to dictate the pattern of development for assisted emigration to the Australian colonies. More pragmatic considerations and methods had to be employed. Elliot was the official to whom much of the responsibility fell for the management and decision-making concerning the various schemes that operated. He himself held views not incompatible with the theorists, but philosophical and theoretical interests had to be seen in relation to the feasibility of policy and procedures.

Howick played a major role in introducing Wakefieldian ideas to colonial reform. But Elliot was the constant in the equation. He was there at the inception of government-assisted emigration and he remained a significant force throughout the decades of so called 'Wakefieldian influence'. He supported in principle, as Howick did, the theory of systematic colonization, but he moulded and formulated the emigration schemes in response to a variety of pressures and to deal in the most effective and efficient way possible the movement of thousands of people to the other side of the world.

¹⁰² Mills, *Colonization*, p. 338.

Conclusion

Government-assisted emigration from Britain transformed the Australian colonies. Men, women and children, willingly transferred from an industrializing nation to a new and challenging environment, helped to restructure Australia's population. This was no easy enterprise. It relied upon a complex and contrived administrative and bureaucratic framework, financial subsidy and the interaction of the imperial government, colonial authorities, private enterprise and voluntary agencies. How has examination of Elliot's career extended understanding of these mechanisms? What was Elliot's contribution to government-assisted emigration?

Neither the Emigration Commissioners appointed in 1831 nor Elliot himself had any previous experience of assisted emigration. Their appointment was intended to be a temporary arrangement. This reflected the uncertain and imprecise nature of the government-managed emigration schemes which resulted from the Ripon Regulations. It was a period of experimentation, innovation, imperfection and learning. For Elliot the government's venture into the field of assisted-emigration was an opportunity to advance his career and extend his administrative experience. Examination of Elliot's role has revealed both the creative and the more mundane methods that were used to organize and assist emigration during these initial years. The promotional aspects are particularly worthy of note. The notices and leaflets fashioned and distributed by Elliot were indispensable devices for publicising the government schemes. They were basic but were the forerunners of the more sophisticated emigration literature that emerged in later decades.

Information however was ineffective in isolation. The early emigration schemes could not have operated without the help of agencies such as the London Emigration Committee and the participation of ship owners. Elliot valued and nurtured this liaison. He and his superiors knew only too well that the Colonial Office did not have the financial or human resources to manage emigration without such help. Elliot recognized the benefit and necessity of developing communication networks among charitable organizations, gentry, parish officers and commercial interests. Such networks and associations became the life-blood of assisted-emigration.

But the most significant feature of Elliot's earliest foray into the field of assisted emigration was his misgiving about the female emigration schemes. His conviction that shipping single women *en masse* to the colonies was not a sensible answer to Australia's problem of gender imbalance ensured that during his time as Agent-General and as chairman of the CLEC family emigration prevailed. Contemporary criticism of the schemes undoubtedly made Elliot more resolved. Elliot's attitude was pivotal in determining the gender balance of assisted emigrants during the late 1830s and 1840s. This was to have far-reaching effects on Australia's demographic structure.

Administering emigration was a challenging assignment. This study has revealed the strategies Elliot used to address the demands made on his office. But personal qualities were also relevant and played no little part in shaping his style of administration. The most influential factor in Elliot's handling of the process of assisted-emigration was the meagre number of staff Elliot had to support him. His 'hands on' approach was out of necessity, but it had its value. It enabled Elliot to accumulate a wealth of experience and knowledge about the routine and

the humdrum, as well as the more weighty problems of policy. He became an 'expert' in emigration. This expertise secured his ascendancy in colonial administration. But it was also advantageous for the process of emigration. Elliot developed a profound understanding about the requirements and procedures of the movement of people to a destination twelve thousand miles away.

His enthusiasm, diligence and commitment for work were apparent. These qualities were undoubtedly beneficial to his approach, but organisational skills were also pertinent. It has been seen that his liaison with parishes, landlords and local committees were the mainstay of his recruitment operations. Co-operation with these agencies encouraged a reciprocal association that benefited all parties. This cooperation was only one facet of the positive approach which Elliot tried to adopt for administering emigration. Although colonial administration remained a largely reactive process, Elliot's attempt to bring an element of foresight into his methods proved effective. He learned quickly that intending emigrants could be irresolute and capricious. Well aware that local economic changes, especially when these involved the probability of a revival of employment opportunities, could disrupt his emigration programme, he was always keen to finalise arrangements promptly.

Economic considerations were paramount. It is evident that these fashioned his approach to administering all aspects of the emigration service. He was always conscious that the colonial emigration fund must be administered responsibly, and was always keen to seek the least costly option. But this was not done to the exclusion of humanitarian concerns. Testimony shows that while Elliot tended to concentrate recruitment on one area to keep administration costs to a minimum, he also revealed altruistic motives by indicating that this also

ensured emigrants would know as least some of their fellow passengers during the long voyage.¹ Attempting to combine humanitarian concerns with imperial and colonial economic and social imperatives was no easy task. The latter inevitably dominated.

Images of British paupers swelling the decks of mid nineteenth-century emigrant ships departing for Australia remain a dominant feature of emigration history. Recent conjecture that some assisted emigrants may have been unconvicted criminals gives currency to this perception. The argument that the British government was not in collusion with parishes and with gentry and aristocratic landlords to rid Britain of its inferior population is supported by evidence presented in this study. The 'push' factor in government-assisted emigration during this period was strong. Malthusian fears, together with economic and social restructuring provided a powerful impetus. But the 'pull' elements were also relevant to the question of the character and quality of emigrants. Colonial land sales financed the emigration schemes. The colonies' desperate need for labour was the main attraction. Colonial authorities attempted to control the quality of the immigrants by formulating regulations but their interpretation lay with Elliot and his selecting officers. Shultz described Elliot as an 'idealistic man caught between his ideals and the practical problems of selecting the best emigrants available, not necessarily the kind wanted by colonial employers'.² It has been shown that on occasion Elliot was flexible in his interpretation of these rules. But overwhelmingly the evidence suggests that Elliot was always mindful that the colonies were providing the funds for

¹ Elliot to O'Connell, 17 Mar. 1838, CO 386/21.

² R.J. Shultz, 'Immigration into Eastern Australia 1788-1851', *Historical Studies*, 14 (1970), pp. 273-82 at p. 273.

emigration, and he was committed to selecting, whenever practicable, emigrants suitable to colonial needs. His paternalistic concern for the humanitarian aspects of emigration was evident, but he rarely allowed these considerations to interfere with his stringent application of the criteria for selected assisted emigrants. He was well aware that the tensions between colonial and imperial government, often aggravated by the debate over responsible government, would inevitably result in colonial criticism of his handling of emigration. He was always keen, therefore, to recruit emigrants who would be seen to be an asset to the colony.

The antagonism between Elliot and Pinnock has distorted representation of the emigrants recruited under the government scheme. But Elliot's official and private correspondence discloses that even when dealing with influential friends, he stood by his maxim – only eligible applicants would be given a free passage. The criticism directed at Elliot from Scottish landowners for 'creaming off' the best of the labour force is illustrative of his commitment to recruiting those who possessed suitable skills. Of course there were exceptions. His willingness to secure passages for Irish Crown witnesses demonstrates that there were occasions when he was willing to put imperial above colonial need. There were also areas over which he had little control. It was difficult to prevent dishonesty or simple inefficiency at local level or at the ports. But overall, the evidence presented here supports studies which have rejected claims that the imperial government was shovelling out the dregs of society.

As important as selection was the delivery of emigrants to the Australian shores in good health. Contemporary testimony was powerful in its condemnation of Elliot's lack of achievements in passenger protection. Historical

interpretations have been ambivalent³ and flawed.⁴ The evidence presented in this study rejects assumptions of Elliot's complacency towards the unsatisfactory provisions of the Passenger Acts. Elliot was sensitive to the need for improvement in passenger protection and displayed innovative as well as pragmatic qualities when he turned his attention to the issue. MacDonagh was correct to defend Elliot against the tendentious nature of the *Durham Report*. But he was mistaken in his surmise that it was the *Durham Report* which jolted Elliot into action⁵ – Elliot had already by this time exhibited a willingness to improve the welfare of passengers.

Evidence in this present study also challenges the validity of the view that Elliot opposed state intervention.⁶ A more accurate assessment is that Elliot was reluctant to interfere without good reason. In his management of assisted-emigration, he adhered to principles of free trade wherever practicable. He recognized that government interference and restrictions, particularly in dealings with shipowners, were likely to raise fares. This was always an important consideration for the Australian passage, where assisted emigration relied heavily on relatively⁷ cheap passages. He was attentive to the fragility of the balance between commercial and humanitarian interests, as he was conscious that shifts in that balance could destabilize the emigration process. On occasions, he and his superiors miscalculated spectacularly. The terrible losses on the Atlantic crossing during the Irish exodus of 1847 underlined that there was still much to be done to improve health and safety on emigrant ships. But he maintained that in

³ For example, MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*.

⁴ For example, Dunkley, 'Emigration and the State'.

⁵ MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 133-5.

⁶ Dunkley, 'Emigration and the State', p. 371.

⁷ Relative to the Atlantic passage.

exceptional circumstances, it was preferable for emigrants to be offered the chance to escape almost certain death at home, than impose shipping restrictions which by raising fares would limit the number who could be given free passages. For Elliot it was the lesser of two evils. But there can be no doubt that Elliot was willing to interfere in passenger protection and made a significant contribution to the improvement of passenger protection which culminated in the Passenger Act of 1855.

Assessment of Elliot's contribution to passenger protection raised wider questions about his the extent of his influence in formulating policy. In dismissing Elliot as a mere 'career civil servant', MacDonagh was underestimating Elliot's ascendancy in the policy-making process. Elliot was making policy decisions from his earliest association with assisted emigration. The expertise he acquired during his association placed him in a commanding position. At times policy decisions were a spontaneous reaction to a pressing problem. Others were more considered and intentional. His policy of family emigration was undoubtedly in this bracket.

Expertise alone does not account for his authority. Colonial Office circumstances were conducive to Elliot's power. The expansion of colonial business and the high turnover of parliamentary secretaries of state allowed Elliot to assume substantial responsibility in policy matters. His administrative ability secured Stephen's sanction and support, without which he would have found advancement difficult. The working relationship Elliot established with secretaries of state was another source of influence – Howick, for example, played a pivotal role in Elliot's career. But social relationships were also important.

Elliot's social sphere included those who were influential in colonial and government affairs. It was social networks that sustained Elliot's ascendancy.

Examination of Elliot's role in policy-making is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it discloses the processes involved in formulation of policy and how permanent officials were able to achieve influence. Secondly, it shows that the assisted-emigration programme owed much to Elliot. It was he who moulded the policy which helped to populate Australia.

One of the strengths claimed for this thesis is the attention given to Elliot's philosophical and intellectual persuasions. Sutherland argued that a central concern of government growth during this period was the complexities of the relationship between a civil servant and his 'world, the interaction of his work and his social and personal life'.⁸ Previously, little was known about Elliot's social and personal life. But now his network of friends and associates is more conspicuous. The extent of Elliot's role in policy-making has been established. Of central concern is his relationship with philosophical radicals, colonial reformers and political economists.

There is no doubt that Elliot moved within the inner circle of philosophical radicals. Despite Wakefield's censure of Elliot, it is evident that Elliot was sympathetic to Wakefield's ideas. His distinction of being the initial intermediary between Wakefield and Howick is significant. Finer's system of mechanisms for transmission of Benthamite ideas seemed, at first sight, a comfortable fit. Certainly Elliot's connections with philosophical radicals cannot be ignored. But it is difficult to establish precisely that Elliot was driven by Benthamite principles. It is reasonable to assume that as he moved in the same circles as philosophical

⁸ Sutherland (ed.), *Studies in the Growth of government*, p. 2.

radicals and numbered some among his close friends, he would absorb at least some of their ideas. But as to the extent of their influence, it is possible only to surmise. There are indicators however, that imply Elliot's philosophical persuasion. For example, his tendency to favour free trade principles and his interest in education are compatible with Benthamite ideology.

But Elliot's motives cannot be explained so easily. The nature of colonial administration was distinctive. The business of emigration was diverse. Elliot had to be flexible in his application and interpretation of policy. He was at heart an administrator. Philosophical influences cannot be eliminated. But government-assisted emigration policy was largely shaped by the demands that were placed on Elliot and his department – by the dynamics of the emigration process itself. The changing economic and social circumstances in the colonies and in Britain, the unique circumstances of Australian settlement, and the logistics involved in transferring thousands of people to the other side of the world were the predominant factors in shaping emigration policy.

This thesis has been concerned with two historiographical themes: emigration history and administrative history. Elliot has been unveiled as an important figure in both fields. Following his introduction to Elliot and some of his friends, Carlyle noted that 'they are pleasant young men...but the world will not be changed by them'.⁹ Elliot indeed did not change the world. But he did play a substantial part in transforming the population of a colony. His direction of emigration policy had resounding effects in Australia until the end of the nineteenth century. Above all, Elliot is another example of the powerful nineteenth-century civil servant epitomised by Chadwick, Kay-Shuttleworth and

⁹ Carlyle to A, Carlyle, 6 June 1833, Marrs, *Carlyle Letters*, p. 112.

Trevelyan, who successfully lived through the transition from a civil service characterised by jobbery and family connection to one where progress was based on merit and ability.

APPENDIX 1**The Colonial Office, 14 Downing Street, London**

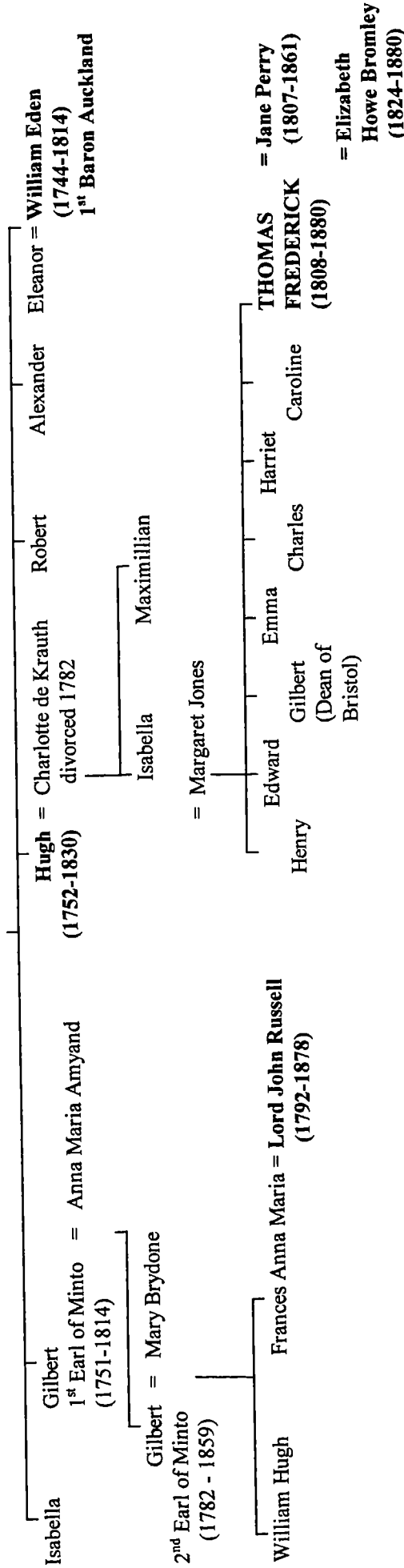
Date c1860s. Note the cracks in the brickwork on the right hand side of the building, which is shored up by wooden braces. Some of the windows are broken and have paper inserted to prevent draughts. The Emigration Office was housed in this building until 1838.

Photograph courtesy of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

APPENDIX 2

ELLIOT FAMILY TREE

Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto = Agnes Murray Kynynmound
3rd Baronet (1722 - 1777)



Showing main line of descent and connections with the Russell and Eden Families.

Sources: Minto papers, NLS; Countess of Minto, *Memoir of Hugh Elliot*.

APPENDIX 3

Convicts transported from the United Kingdom to Australia 1831 - 47			
Year Ship arrived	Number of Male Convicts	Number of Female Convicts	Total
1831	4179	839	5018
1832	3955	527	4482
1833	5813	967	6780
1834	4025	607	4632
1835	5275	482	5757
1836	4980	983	5963
1837	4221	646	4867
1838	4523	614	5137
1839	2655	1028	3683
1840	3076	644	3720
1841	2659	803	3462
1842	4656	678	5334
1843	3023	654	3677
1844	3797	641	4438
1845	3016	607	3623
1846	1738	333	2071
1847	905	676	1581

Source: Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies*, pp. 366 - 8.

APPENDIX 4

Emigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia 1831 - 1855		
Year Ship arrived	Total number of Emigrants	Number of Government - Assisted Emigrants
1831	1644	6194 *
1832	3902	
1833	5830	
1834	3656	
1835	3378	
1836	3858	1742
1837	6276	3941
1838	10284	8004
1839	16180	12618
1840	14034	11318
1841	23821	20499
1842	12143	8981
1843	1320	74
1844	4808	4220
1845	1415	753
1846	2207	1479
1847	4550	3325
1848	14346	11666
1849	32584	23339
1850	17347	9299
1851	14211	9080
1852	63707	27126
1853	71070	32291
1854	73118	37066
1855	63399	41173

* No accurate figures for individual years available

Source: Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, pp.261-64.

APPENDIX 5

REGULATIONS ON BOARD THE GOVERNMENT EMIGRANT SHIP

ASIA

1. Out of bed at seven.
2. Beds to be rolled up, and, in fine weather, carried on deck.
3. Breakfast at Eight.
4. Clean Decks at Ten.
5. Dine at One.
6. Tea at Six.
7. Each Mess to clean the space in front of its own sleeping places, by one Man appointed in rotation for the purpose: *and to keep it clean whenever there shall be any filth requiring to be scraped.*
8. Each mess to have a Head-Man, approved by the Surgeon Superintendent, who shall settle the above rotation, and report to the Surgeon any misconduct or neglect requiring complaint.
9. In cleaning Decks, the Men are also to brush out or sweep their berths.
10. There is no objection to the Women's cleaning their side of the Deck, if they prefer it; but in case of their not doing it effectively, the Men must be ready to do the whole.
11. The Women are to brush out their own berths.
12. The bottom-boards of the berths are to be removed, and dry scrubbed, and taken on deck once or twice a week, as may be ordered by the Surgeon Superintendent. All the grown people, if necessary, to assist on these occasions.
13. Two men are to be taken every day, in rotation, from the whole list of the Males above 15, to be sweepers for the day. They are to sweep both sides of the deck. The deck to be swept down after every meal.
14. One Man is to be taken every day, in rotation, to be Cook's Assistant. The Coppers should be cleaned regularly.
15. One or two Men, as may be found necessary, must be taken, in rotation, to clean the Male Hospital, and any spaces of the deck that do not belong to any particular Mess.
16. One or two of the Women, as may be necessary, to be taken in like manner to clean the Female Hospital. Every one above 15 to take her turn.
17. For the superintendence of duties not under the Head-men of Messes, and for general uses, four Constables are to be appointed by the People, to relieve each other, and one to be constantly on duty.
18. A certain number of men to be on watch at night. One lantern is to be kept burning at each of the three hatchways, and not to be removed.
19. On beginning to clean Decks at Ten, every body under 15 is to be sent on deck, weather permitting, to be inspected by the Surgeon or the Teachers, and seen to be clean.
20. After inspection, School.

APPENDIX 5 Continued.

21. On every Sunday, the people are expected to assemble before Divine service, in the order of their berths, the Males on one side, and the Females on the other, that the Surgeon may pass along them and see that they are clean and decent. The Constables will muster them for this purpose.
22. Washing days every Monday and Thursday. When those days are not fine, others to be substituted as the Surgeon may direct.
23. No Washing is on any account to be suffered between decks, and no drying of Wet Clothes there.
24. Spirits are not to be allowed.
25. The Surgeon is enjoined to refuse the Wine, when Wine is in issue, to any person who obstructs or neglects the preceding Regulations; and in case of gross misconduct or violence, he will report it to the Governor on arrival.
26. All doubtful points to be settled by the authority of the Surgeon.
27. The Cook, and the Hospital Man, if the Surgeon appoints one, to be exempt from all other duties whatever.
28. The Constables and the Teachers to be exempt from cleaning decks & *Helping the Cooks & sweeping the decks.*
29. The people are recommended to appoint large watches to be on deck at night in the warm latitudes.
30. They cannot be too diligent in observing the Rules, to avoid Wet between decks, and in attending to every sort of cleanliness of person and abode.
31. They will not fail to bear in mind that, on their arrival in the Colony, their conduct during the voyage will be known; and that, therefore, not only is it essential to their health, and perhaps even their safety, to attend to the Rules which have been agreed to for their well-being on the passage, but that individuals who perversely thwart them, may feel the consequences seriously in their prospects afterwards.

**T. FREDERICK
ELLIOT**

Devonport, November 6, 1838.

32. *The Male Water Closet between Decks has been ordered to be nailed up.*
33. *The Female Water Closet between Decks is to be locked up all day.*
34. *The same woman, who has the cleaning of the Hospital is to see that the Water Closet is clean in the morning - lock it up, and take the key to the Doctor at such hour as he shall appoint.*
35. *The men will only use the Privies on the starboard side of the Deck, being the same side as they sleep on below, and the women will have the use of the two on the larboard side.*

Text in italics denotes additions and amendments in Elliot's hand.

Source: Public Record Office, CO 384/48

APPENDIX 6

The Colonial Office's Permanent Establishment	
1821	1825
Secretary of State	Secretary of State
Under Secretary (later Parliamentary Under Secretary)	Under Secretary (later Parliamentary Under Secretary)
Chief Clerk	Permanent Under Secretary
9 Clerks (In 1822 these were divided into grades)	Chief Clerk
Librarian	4 Senior (First Class) Clerks
Private Secretary to the Secretary of State	1 temporary Senior Clerk (Feb.-Aug.)
Counsel	5 Assistant (Second Class) Clerks
2 Office keepers	5 Junior (Third Class) Clerks *
Housekeeper	3 Assistant Junior (Fourth Class) Clerks
	Précis writer
	Librarian
	Assistant Librarian
	Private Secretary to the Secretary of State
	2 private secretaries to the Under Secretaries
	Counsel
	2 office keepers
	Housekeeper
	2 office porters
	* Elliot initially appointed to this class

APPENDIX 7

Secretaries of state for the Colonial and War Departments 1825-1852
Secretaries of state for the colonies 1854-68

Date of Appointment	Names of secretaries of state
1812	Earl Bathurst
1827	Rt Hon F J Robinson (Viscount Goderich)
1827	Rt Hon W Huskisson
1828	Rt Hon Sir George Murray
1830	Viscount Goderich (Earl of Ripon)
1833	Rt Hon E G Stanley
1834	Rt Hon Thomas Spring Rice
1834	Earl of Aberdeen
1835	Rt Hon Charles Grant (Lord Glenelg)
1839	Marquess of Normanby
1839	Lord John Russell
1841	Lord Stanley
1845	Rt Hon W E Gladstone
1846	Earl Grey (3 rd)
1852	Rt Hon Sir John Pakington
1852	Duke of Newcastle
1854	Rt Hon Sir G Grey
1855 - Feb	Rt Hon Sidney Herbert
1855 - Mar	Lord John Russell
1855 - July	Rt Hon Sir William Molesworth
1855 - Nov	Rt Hon Henry Labouchere
1858 - Feb	Lord Stanley
1858 - May	Rt Hon Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton
1859	Duke of Newcastle
1864	Rt Hon Edward Cardwell
1866	Earl of Carnarvon
1867	Duke of Buckingham and Chandos

Source: Anne Thurston, *Sources for Colonial Studies in the Public Record Office, vol. 1, Records of the Colonial Office, Dominions Office, Commonwealth relations Office and Commonwealth Office; A revised and expanded version of Public Record Office Handbook No. 3: records of the Colonial and Dominions Offices* by R.B. Pugh (London, 1995), p. 70.

APPENDIX 8

Duties of a schoolmaster on an emigrant vessel

Colonial Land & Emigration Office,
9, Park Street, Westminster,
29th. Dec 1848

Sir,

With reference to your application I am directed by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners to state that they have appointed you to be Schoolmaster, on board the Emigrant Ship, Sir Geo Seymour and to transmit to you the following instructions for your guidance.

1. _ You will consider yourself under the Orders of the Surgeon Superintendent. J. J. McGregor Esq.
2. _ You will hold School daily, weather permitting, during such hours as may be settled by you, with the concurrence of the Surgeon.
3. _ You will give instructions not only to the children, but to such of the Adult Emigrants as may be willing to receive it, and for this purpose you will make suitable arrangements, so as not to interfere with the Childrens' classes.
4. _ You will give your best attention to the maintenance of good order and regularity among all the Emigrants, in the manner directed by the Surgeon Superintendent.
5. _ It will be your duty to inspect the Children daily to see that they are clean, before School commences.
6. _ A supply of Books, and other articles, of which a List is annexed has been put on Board, and are to be considered as under your charge during the Voyage. _ Such of the Books as are not of an educational character, are intended to be lent out to those Emigrants who may desire to read them, and will engage to take care of and return them.
7. _ You will keep a List of the parties to whom the Books are lent, and see that they are duly returned to you in a reasonable time, and that care be taken of what has thus been provided for the amusement and instruction of all.
8. _ At the conclusion of the Voyage you will deliver up all the Books &c to the Surgeon Superintendent, in order that he may distribute them to the most deserving of the Emigrants.
9. _ In conclusion, I am to state, that in addition to your free passage, the Commissioners will recommend you to the Local Government for a gratuity of £15, provided you discharge the duties of your Office to the satisfaction of the Colonial Authorities.

Source: extracted from Florence Chuk, *The Somerset Years* (Ballarat, 1987)

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ii) papers of Emma, Lady Hislop

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Catton papers, papers of Robert Wilmot Horton	Derbyshire Record Office
4th Earl of Clarendon	Bodleian Library
Sir George Gipps	Mitchell Library, New South Wales State Library, Sydney
William E. Gladstone	British Library
2nd Earl Grey	University of Durham Library
3rd Earl Grey	University of Durham Library
14th Earl of Derby	Liverpool Record Office
John Stuart Mill	British Library
First Baron Monteagle	National Library of Ireland
James Denham Pinnock	In the possession of Mr. D. Pinnock, London
5th Duke of Richmond	West Sussex Record Office
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