

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL No. 20.

THURSDAY, 3RD JULY, 1884.

PRESENT:

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

(SIR GEORGE FERGUSON BOWEN, G.C.M.G.)

His Honour the Acting Chief Justice (JAMES RUSSELL.)

The Honourable the Acting Colonial Secretary, (FREDERICK STEWART.)

„ the Attorney General, (EDWARD LOUGHLIN O'MALLEY.)

„ the Colonial Treasurer, (ALFRED LISTER.)

„ the Surveyor General, (JOHN MACNEILE PRICE.)

„ HENRY GEORGE THOMSETT, R.N.

„ PHINEAS RYRIE.

„ WILLIAM KESWICK.

„ THOMAS JACKSON.

„ FREDERICK DAVID SASSOON.

„ WONG SHING.

ABSENT:

His Honour the Chief Justice, (SIR GEORGE PHILLIPPO, Knt.), on leave.

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary, (WILLIAM HENRY MARSH, C.M.G.), on leave.

The Council met in pursuance of adjournment.

Minutes read and confirmed.

VOTE PASSED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.—The Acting Colonial Secretary moved the following Vote passed by the Finance Committee:—

(*Finance Committee, 26th June, 1884.*)

Extraordinary Works.

C.S.O.
1538 of 1884. Reclamation at Causeway Bay, being unexpended balance of 1883, revote, \$6,000.00

The Colonial Treasurer seconded.

Question—put and passed.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE.—The Acting Colonial Secretary laid on the Table the following Papers:—

Despatch respecting the charges brought against the Surveyor General's Department by the *Hongkong Telegraph* Newspaper.

Report by the Surveyor General on the progress and present position of the Tytám Waterworks, 25th June, 1884.

CLOSING OF THE SESSION.—The Honourable P. RYRIE addressed the Council in the following terms:—

"Your Excellency, as you are now about to prorogue this the first session of the newly constituted Council, I ask leave to make a few remarks regarding it. I think every one will admit that the progress of business during the session has been most satisfactory. The harmony that has prevailed could not be surpassed, I am sure, in any similar assembly in any part of the world; and I attribute this, first, to the fact that the measures which Your Excellency has brought forward, and the money votes for which you have asked this Council, have been acknowledged by everyone to be for the benefit of the entire public of the colony; and I feel assured that in the expenditure of these votes every possible economy consistent with efficiency will be studied. Much of this harmony has also been due to the genial manner and thorough business qualifications Your Excellency has displayed in conducting the business of the Council. It has been my experience in days gone by in this Council that there has been a certain amount of

friction and asperity of feeling between the official and unofficial elements, but nothing of the sort has displayed itself during the present session, and I feel assured that we shall see no recurrence of it during Your Excellency's term of office; and that you will always receive the support of the members of this Council. I think no one will deny that the re-constituted Council has been a success. It may be said by some people that our new unofficial members have not given us any great oratorical displays since the session commenced, but the organisation of the various committees—where every measure is thoroughly discussed and threshed out before coming to the Council, has rendered these displays unnecessary. In conclusion, I consider Your Excellency has brought this Council into good working order, and I am sure you will have the support of all the official and unofficial members in maintaining it in that state."

His Excellency the Governor closed the Session with the following Speech:—

"HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

1. The business of the Session, which has lasted for more than four months, having now been brought to a close, I am enabled to release you for a time from your attendance in Council.
2. During the recess, several measures of importance, to which your attention has in some cases been already directed, will be matured by my Government, and will be submitted for your consideration at your next Meeting. I believe that it is universally agreed that the public convenience will be best consulted by opening the annual session of the Council in the month of November of each year.
3. I thank you, in the name of the Queen, for the supplies which you have granted for every branch of Her Majesty's Service in this Colony. It will be the duty of my Government to exercise a watchful supervision over their expenditure, and to practise such economy as may be consistent with the efficiency of the several Departments. As you are already aware, it has been my object to reserve as much money as possible for the prosecution of the important Sanitary and other Public Works which are urgently required. The Report recently laid before you by the Acting Auditor General shows that the probable assets of the Colony on the 1st January, 1885, will amount to \$659,402. This sum will probably suffice for next year's expenditure on the Extraordinary Works connected with Sanitation and the increased Water Supply; so that it will not be necessary before the close of 1885 to take any steps for raising the small loan not to exceed one year's revenue, which you have already sanctioned in principle. It will be recollected that Hongkong is one of the very few communities in the world which is now absolutely without a Public Debt.
4. With regard to legislation; Twenty Bills have become law during the Session. Of these several are of much public importance, and received your careful attention; such are, in particular, the Ordinances for the Registration of Medical Practitioners; for the facilitation of the business of Savings' Banks; for the regulation of the Post Office; and for the re-arrangement of the Stamp duties; together with several measures amending former Ordinances which experience had proved to be defective. It may be confidently expected that valuable and permanent results will be developed from legislation of such a character, based on no abstract theories, but on practical experience; and neither impaired by haste, nor influenced by favour, nor impeded by faction.
5. With regard to Public Works; I am happy to be able to announce that a large instalment of the Sanitary improvements sanctioned by you has already been accomplished. The reclamation of the unhealthy lands at Yaumati, on the Kowloon Peninsula, is nearly completed; and the reclamation from the sea at Causeway Bay will be finished before the end of this year. In both these localities, extensive areas will be thrown open for building purposes. Moreover, under arrangements with several owners of marine allotments in that quarter, the construction of sea-walls and embankments has also been initiated at the Western extremity of the City; and the early erection is expected of an important suburb in that neighbourhood.
6. Owing to the length of the negotiations with the War Office and the Admiralty, I have not yet received the final decision of the Imperial Government on the proposal to unite the Eastern and Western Prayas by an embankment and road in front of the Naval and Military Establishments. But steam-dredging machinery has already arrived from England, and will shortly be put into operation along the noxious foreshore. An aggregate length of two miles of new and improved main sewers has been constructed in the streets principally of the Central and Eastern districts, forming portion of the comprehensive system of drainage in contemplation for the entire City. But in respect of the equally vital question of private house-drainage, it has been found necessary to defer action pending the passing of the new Building Ordinance, which will be presented for your consideration during the next Session.

7. Among other works of public importance, the new Victoria College and the Quarantine Hospital at Stone Cutters' Island are now being actively pushed forward; while the works in the Tytam Valley in connexion with the extension of the Water Supply continue to make as favourable progress as the difficult nature of that undertaking will permit. Preparations are being made for the early erection of the new Central Market. The funds required to defray the cost of draining the marshy lands in the Wong-nei-chong Valley, with the view to their conversion into a Public Park, having been voted by you, no avoidable delay will take place in commencing a work so desirable on Sanitary and on other public grounds.
8. With respect to Public Education; the Report of the Government Inspector, which has been laid on your table, bears witness to satisfactory progress. It will be seen that 'both the number of Primary Schools under Government supervision in the Colony, and the number of Scholars attending such schools have been more than doubled in the last ten years.' It is, moreover, particularly gratifying to observe that this increase extends to the female as well as to the male portion of the community. At the same time, it is certain that great advantage will be gained for the higher education through the erection of the new Victoria College, and through the foundation of Government Scholarships enabling a certain number of promising young men to complete their professional studies in England.
9. Much attention has been given during the past year to the improvement of the drill and discipline of our Police Corps, which is now a very efficient body. One favourable result is the diminution of serious and violent crime. Successful efforts have also been made towards the suppression of gambling-houses; an object to which the principal members of the Chinese community rightly attach special importance; and to which the Honourable Member who so worthily represents in this Council his Chinese countrymen recently called attention.
10. I have now glanced at the internal affairs of this Colony under the several heads of Finance, Legislation, Public Works, Education, and Police. But, Honourable Gentlemen, it should never be forgotten that Hongkong is the centre of British power, influence, and commerce in this quarter of the globe; and that, as I know on the very highest authority, the foremost statesmen of England attach far greater importance to this Colony than to other Colonies of infinitely larger territorial extent. Consequently, we are here deeply interested in the stirring events passing around us, and especially in the concerns of the vast neighbouring Empire. I congratulate you on the prospect of permanent peace between France and China, notwithstanding some fresh disturbances in Tonquin; for the outbreak of war could not fail to prove a grave interruption to the trade of this Colony. I congratulate you also on the probable prospect of, ere very long, seeing China thrown open, through the extension of railways and telegraphs, to the influences of European commerce and civilization. I have not omitted to suggest both to the Imperial Government and to the British Minister at Peking that it is highly desirable to press alike on the French and on the Chinese Governments the importance of opening to general trade the rich South-eastern Provinces of China, and also those extensive countries in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, which have lately been brought under the rule or protectorate of France.
11. And now, Honourable gentlemen, in conclusion, permit me to thank you on my own behalf, as the Representative of the Queen, for the valuable advice and assistance which you have afforded me during the recent Session, and for the zeal and assiduity with which you have applied yourselves to the questions of public interest which I have proposed for your consideration. It is alike my pride and happiness to recognise the cordial relations existing between myself and all the members of the Council. It is generally agreed, moreover, that your conduct has already fully justified my efforts to procure the consent of the Imperial Government to an enlargement of the Un-official element in your body, with the view of securing a more adequate representation of the opinions and feelings of the entire Community. You have indeed left little to be desired by the warmest friends of Hongkong, whether here or elsewhere, except that, under the favour of the Supreme Ruler, future Sessions may maintain the high character, that the loyalty, moderation, and public spirit with which you have commenced the exercise of your privileges and the performance of your duties, have already earned for the re-constructed Legislature of this Colony.
12. I now prorogue this Council to the 19th day of next November."