

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, No. 24.

MONDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 1890.

PRESENT:

HIS EXCELLENCY THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT
(The Honourable FRANCIS FLEMING, C.M.G.).

The Honourable the Acting Colonial Secretary, (WALTER MEREDITH DEANE, C.M.G.).
 „ the Acting Attorney General, (EDWARD JAMES ACKROYD).
 „ the Acting Colonial Treasurer, (HENRY ERNEST WODEHOUSE, C.M.G.).
 „ the Surveyor General, (SAMUEL BROWN).
 „ the Acting Registrar General, (NORMAN GILBERT MITCHELL-INNES).
 „ PHINEAS RYRIE.
 „ CATCHICK PAUL CHATER.
 „ JAMES JOHNSTONE KESWICK.
 „ HO KAI, M.B., C.M.
 „ THOMAS HENDERSON WHITEHEAD.

The Council met pursuant to adjournment.

The Minutes of the last Meeting, held on the 13th October, 1890, were read and confirmed.

His Excellency addressed the Council and stated that, with respect to the Bill which has been read a first time in connection with the sale of shares in Companies registered under the Companies' Ordinance, a telegram had been received from the Secretary of State to the effect that he had no objection to the Bill being proceeded with if the Un-Official Members agree. His Excellency further stated that he would therefore leave it to the Honourable Member who introduced the Bill to take such further steps in connection with it as he might deem desirable.

Read the following Minutes under the hand of His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government:—

(1.)

F. FLEMING.

C. O. Desp.
175 of 1890.

The Officer Administering the Government recommends the Council to vote a sum of One thousand Eight hundred and Seventy-eight Dollars, (\$1,878), being the equivalent of £313 at the exchange of 3/4 per Dollar, as an excess over the amount estimated for 12 Maxim Guns and Ammunition about to be supplied. The excess is due to the additions made on the recommendation of General BEVAN EDWARDS, R.E., and Major CLARK, R.E.

Government House, Hongkong, 11th October, 1890.

(2.)

F. FLEMING.

C.S.O.
1383 & 2397
of 1890.

The Officer Administering the Government recommends the Council to vote a sum of Six thousand Three hundred and Twenty-eight Dollars, (\$6,328), for the re-construction of the landing Pier at Stone Cutters' Island.

Government House, Hongkong, 11th October, 1890.

(3.)

F. FLEMING.

C.S.O.
1957 of 1890.

The Officer Administering the Government recommends the Council to vote a sum of Sixty Dollars, (\$60), as an allowance to the Hospital Steward for collecting Hospital bills, at the rate of \$20 per month, for October, November and December of the present year.

This work was formerly performed by one of the Treasury Shroffs who received \$10 per month, so there will be a saving of \$30 in the Treasury.

Government House, Hongkong, 14th October, 1890.

The Acting Colonial Secretary moved that these Minutes be referred to the Finance Committee.

The Acting Colonial Treasurer seconded.

His Excellency addressed the Council in connection with the increased costs of the Maxim Guns and the Pier at Stone Cutters' Island.

Question—put and agreed to.

Honourable T. H. WHITEHEAD addressed the Council, and, pursuant to notice, moved,—

That the Government be requested to formulate and lay before the Council proposals for defraying the extraordinary expenditure on Public Works by means of a loan.

Honourable P. RYRIE addressed the Council and seconded the resolution.

Honourable J. J. KESWICK addressed the Council.

His Excellency addressed the Council.

Question—put and agreed to.

Honourable T. H. WHITEHEAD, pursuant to notice, asked the following:—

Have the Government received a report from the Honourable E. J. Ackroyd and Mr. Nicolle on the recent defalcations in the Money Order Office and on the causes which led to them, if so, will they lay it on the table, together with a statement of the measures which have been taken to prevent such defalcations in future?

The Honourable the Acting Colonial Secretary replied.

VOTES PASSED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.—The Acting Colonial Secretary, by direction of His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, laid on the table the Report of the Finance Committee of the 6th instant, (No. 18), and moved that the following Votes referred to therein be passed, viz.:—

	(1.)		
C. O. Desp. 43 of 17th March, 1890.	Building-grant to the Diocesan Home and Orphanage, to defray half the cost of an improvement in the building,	\$ 355.00	
	(2.)		
C.S.O. 1915 of 1890.	Supplementary Vote for Office Contingencies of the Attorney General,	\$ 30.00	
	(3.)		
C.S.O. 1751 of 1890.	Stipulated increment to the salary of the Veterinary Surgeon, Increase from the 24th October to the end of the year,	\$ 56.45	
	(4.)		
C.S.O. 1513 & 2030 of 1890.	Amount required to complete the sum due for Kowloon well,	\$ 94.72	
	(5.)		
C.S.O. 2060 of 1890.	Supplementary vote for Office Contingencies for the Magistracy,	\$ 150.00	
	(6.)		
C.S.O. 1308 of 1890.	Amount of the judgment debt and costs, in the matter of a Writ of Execution issued by A-TACK against A. G. APCAR, misappropriated by a Bailiff of Supreme Court,	\$ 963.25	
	(7.)		
C.S.O. 1061 of 1890.	Amount of prisoners' property embezzled by Turnkey NG' KAM-FUK, employed as Receiving Officer in Victoria Gaol,	\$ 313.75	
	(8.)		
C.S.O. 1983 of 1890.	Supplementary Vote for Police exclusive of Establishments,	\$ 1,700.00	
	(9.)		
C.S.O. 2229 of 1890.	Supplementary Vote for Office Contingencies of the Treasury, to cover expenses in collecting Village Rates,	\$ 250.00	

The Acting Colonial Treasurer seconded.

Question—put and agreed to.

BILL ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE TO AUTHORISE THE APPROPRIATION OF A SUPPLEMENTARY SUM OF THREE HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY DOLLARS AND SEVENTY-NINE CENTS TO DEFRAY THE CHARGES OF THE YEAR 1889."—The Acting Colonial Secretary moved the first reading of the Bill.

The Acting Colonial Treasurer seconded.

Question—put and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

BILL ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE TO APPLY A SUM NOT EXCEEDING ONE MILLION SIX HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY DOLLARS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF THE YEAR 1891."—The Acting Colonial Secretary moved the First Reading of the Bill and laid on the table the Estimates for 1891.

The Acting Colonial Treasurer seconded.

Question—put and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

The Acting Colonial Secretary laid on the table the following Minute by His Excellency with reference to the Estimates for 1891:—

The Officer Administering the Government has the honour to submit for the consideration of the Legislative Council the Estimated Revenue and Expenditure of the Colony for the year 1891.

2. The Estimates have been carefully prepared by the Acting Colonial Secretary. The work connected with them has been rendered more onerous than usual this year by reason of the readjustments of salaries in accordance with the Secretary of State's instructions. Every endeavour has been made to carry out the principles enunciated in the Despatch on the subject which has already been laid before this Council. In a matter of this kind, where certain exceptions have been made to the increases proposed, it is impossible that every one concerned should be perfectly satisfied. If, however, in some cases the intentions of the Secretary of State have not been carried out, or if there are others which would seem to deserve more indulgence than has been granted to them it will doubtless be competent to effect rectifications hereafter.

3. The Estimated Revenue for 1891 exclusive of any balance on hand at the end of this year, and exclusive of premiums on Land Sales, is \$1,952,098.

The Estimated Revenue for this year was \$1,884,943. The amount estimated for 1891 therefore exceeds this by \$67,155. But it should be borne in mind that the estimated amount to be realized from Land Sales next year has been put down as only \$100,000 whereas that for this year was mentioned as \$300,000. The commercial depression which has existed for some time past has necessarily affected the sale of Government property, and it would have been undesirable to have sold at a time when, as a matter of certainty, but poor prices would have been obtained. The amount realized by the sale of lands this year instead of exceeding \$300,000 will, in all probability, not amount to \$50,000. It is to be hoped, however, that an improved condition of affairs will enable the Estimate under this head to be reached during 1891.

4. The Officer Administering the Government informed the Council a short time since that the probable balance on hand at the end of this year would be \$461,629, but since this announcement was made the Colony has been called upon to pay a larger amount than was anticipated as representing the sum of £116,000 voted for Defence Works. About \$20,000 will therefore have to be deducted from the \$461,629. But on the other hand the improbability of all the amount estimated for Extraordinary Expenditure being spent will more than likely make up for this deficiency.

5. The Council is aware that one of our principal items of Revenue arises from the Opium Monopoly which according to present arrangements is to produce \$477,600 a year. But an item of this nature being actually realized must necessarily depend upon certain contingencies and it is therefore our duty not to rely too implicitly upon such a source of income.

6. The estimated increases and decreases on the different items of revenue for next year are principally the following.

There is an estimated increase in assessed taxes of \$50,000 due to the increase in rateable tenements and to the gross receipt being estimated for 1891 without deduction for unoccupied houses, but this deduction has to be made good from expenditure.

There is also an estimated increase of \$1,000 on carriage and chair licences an amount of over \$10,000 having been received on this account during the first half of this year.

There is an increase of \$3,000 estimated for spirit licences. The sum estimated under this heading last year was \$41,000 whereas that obtained was \$48,794.

There is also an estimated increase of \$4,000 of fees from scholars at the Victoria College—the amount estimated last year under this head having been \$10,000.

An increase from \$65,000 to \$75,000 is also contemplated for rents derived from market stalls and shops.

The estimated decreases are chiefly in the following items:—Boat licences from \$5,700 to \$5,000; Cargo boat licences from \$7,500 to \$7,200; Fines from \$16,000 to \$14,500; Hawkers' licences from \$5,300 to \$5,000; Emigration, which is on the decrease owing to the unwillingness of certain countries to receive Chinese, from \$18,000 to \$15,000; Lands other than those leased, but including Stone Quarries, from \$30,000 to \$28,000.

7. The revised estimated ordinary expenditure for 1891 is \$1,674,780. The estimated extraordinary expenditure \$920,279 instead of \$804,279 as stated by the Officer Administering the Government a short time ago, some omissions having been made in the draft estimates as originally prepared. This makes a total expenditure of \$2,595,059 instead therefore of having a balance of \$46,000 on hand at the end of 1891 there is an estimated deficit of about \$100,000.

The Council has already been informed that the principal causes of additional ordinary expenditure are the increased Military Contribution from £20,000 to £40,000 a year, the additions to salaries amounting to about \$47,000, the introduction of the Electric Light and the changes effected in the Audit Department.

Provision has been made for a Chief Assistant to the Observatory at a salary of \$1,800 in accordance with the recommendation of the Commission.

A sum of \$2,000 has been provided for the upkeep of the Epidemic Hulk now in course of construction.

The expenses of the Police Department have been somewhat increased in consequence of the recent changes which have been made in connection with it, while some additional cost has been proposed for the Gaol Department with a view of obtaining men from England to do duty as Turnkeys.

But the greatest increase on expenditure is caused by that estimated as necessary for Public Works.

As a proof of the continued increase of expenditure under this head it is worthy of remark that in the year 1875 the amount expended on the Surveyor General's Department, on Public Works and Buildings, Roads, Streets and Bridges amounted to \$169,642 whereas for 1891 the estimated sum for the Surveyor General's, the Water and Drainage and the Sanitary Departments amounts to no less than \$920,279 while the total amount estimated for the construction of such Public Buildings as have actually been commenced or are in contemplation is \$2,540,237, which will have to be further increased should a new gaol be constructed.

8. The Officer Administering the Government is fully sensible of effecting economy in so far as is possible. It is at all times difficult to lay down any hard-and-fast line as to how this is to be done, but there are many little ways in which those who are entrusted with the expenditure of public moneys can guard against needless expenditure.

The financial condition of the Colony may be regarded on the whole as satisfactory, the revenue being quite sufficient to meet any ordinary expenditure but while this is so and while not begrudging what is necessary for its development and general good the Officer Administering the Government entirely concurs that every prudence should be exercised in dealing with public moneys.

F. FLEMING,
Officer Administering the Government.

Government House, Hongkong, 20th October, 1890.

BILL ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 8 OF 1873, ENTITLED THE DANGEROUS GOODS ORDINANCE, 1873."—Council in Committee on the Bill.

Bill reported with amendments.

Council resumed.

BILL ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 15 OF 1888 ENTITLED THE RATING ORDINANCE, 1888."—The Acting Attorney General moved the third reading of the Bill.

The Acting Colonial Secretary seconded.

Question—put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Question put—that this Bill do pass.

Bill passed.

BILL ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE TO REPEAL ORDINANCE No. 29 OF 1888 AND TO AMEND ORDINANCE No. 15 OF 1886 ENTITLED THE PEACE PRESERVATION ORDINANCE, 1886."—The Acting Attorney General moved the third reading of the Bill.

The Acting Colonial Secretary seconded.

Question—put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Question put—that this Bill do pass.

Bill passed.

BILL ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE POLICE FORCE CONSOLIDATION ORDINANCE, 1887."—Council in Committee on the Bill.

Bill reported with amendment.

Council resumed.

ADJOURNMENT.—The Council then adjourned till Monday, the 27th October, at 3 P.M.

F. FLEMING,
Officer Administering the Government.

Read and confirmed, this 27th day of October, 1890.

F. A. HAZELAND,
Acting Clerk of Councils.