

26TH OCTOBER, 1891.

PRESENT—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE ACTING GOVERNOR.  
Major-General G. DIGBY BARKER, C.B.

Hon. W. M. GOODMAN, Acting Colonial  
Secretary.

Hon. A. J. LEACH, Acting Attorney-General.

Hon. J. H. STEWART-LOCKHART, Registrar-  
General.

Hon. N. G. MITCHELL-INNES, Colonial  
Treasurer.

Hon. F. A. COOPER, Acting Surveyor-  
General.

Hon. P. RYRIE.

Hon. HO KAI.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the last meeting were read  
and confirmed.

NEW CENTRAL MARKET.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD asked the following  
questions, which were answered by the Acting  
Colonial Secretary—

(1.)—In view of the statement, made by His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, at the last meeting of Council, to the effect that further delay in the matter of the proposed New Central Market involves large and continual loss to the revenue such delay must certainly be avoided, will the Government lay upon the table a report shewing the amount of work done to the said proposed New Market since 17th August last to 30th September, 1891, and its present condition, and inform the Council (a)—If plans and designs for the proposed New Central Market have been decided upon?

The amount of work done in the construction of the New Central Market between the 17th of August and the 30th September was the preparation of about 2,000 cubic feet of granite for the superstructure. Plans and designs have been decided on.

(b.)—If so which have been selected—whether those of the Honourable the Surveyor-General which were disapproved of by Sir Wm. Des Voeux, or those of the professional architect (Mr. H. W. Wills) sent out from England to Hongkong at the request of this Government by the Crown Agents, prepared by him at the special request of Sir Wm. Des Voeux?

The plans prepared by the Surveyor-General with slight modifications, including the suggestion of the Public Works Committee, have been selected. The Government is not aware that Sir William Des Voeux expressed disapproval of Mr. Brown's plans, as regards which he stated in Legislative Council on 12th February, 1890, that "his impressions were all in their favour."

(c)—Has Chang Kee's tender referred to in the resolution of the Honourable J. J. Keswick of 21st July last, or the tender of any other contractor for the superstructure or building of the proposed New Central Market over the foundations been accepted?

(d)—If so, what is the amount of the tender accepted?

As negotiations are not yet completed it is considered inexpedient to reply to these questions at present.

(e)—Whether the plans and detailed statements have been prepared for the whole building complete in every respect, or whether the objectionable system has again been followed of preparing plans, etc., for only a part or portion and leaving the additional aggregate cost a totally unknown quantity?

Plans and elevations of the building have been completed, but the details of the internal fittings, such as stalls, &c., are not yet ready.

(2.)—Will the Government lay on the table a complete statement or return of the amount of monies expended to 30th September, 1891, and the sums then due although not expended—

(a)—In the purchase of the site for the proposed New Central Market?

Reply will be found in the attached tabular statement (\$158,058).

(b)—In the preparation of the ground and foundations?

Reply will be found in the attached tabular statement (\$32,037).

(c)—Of all other expenditure, including the cost of bringing out from London to Hongkong and the salary of the architect. (Mr. H. W. Wills), the return to shew the dates of disbursements and the loss in interest to the ratepayers on the respective amounts to 30th ultimo, also an estimate of the total monies still required to complete the work, and the probable date of completion?

The expenditure incurred for the services of Mr. Wills as Architectural Assistant, who was not engaged exclusively for the Central Market but to assist in connection with Government buildings generally, is as follows:—

Agreement, .....	£	10.9	
Passage to Hongkong, .....	£	45.0.0	
			£45.10.9=\$ 287.63
Half salary during voyage, .....			189.51
Salary from 1st March to 30th June, .....			1,087.17
			Total, \$1,564.31

The estimate of the total monies still required to complete the work is shown in the tabular statement (\$239,962).

### CIVIL HOSPITAL STAFF QUARTERS.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD asked the following questions, the answers to which are appended:—

(3.)—With reference to the statement of the Honourable the Surveyor-General at a meeting of the Finance Committee on the 11th December, 1890, to the effect that the Civil Hospital Staff Quarters or the residence for the Assistant Surgeon, Apothecary, Nursing Staff and others connected with the hospital, though being built on a larger scale than is perhaps necessary, but then (about ten months ago) nearly completed, will the Government lay on the table a statement or return shewing when the building was completed; if not yet completed, why not; if not completed, the probable date when it will be ready for occupation; total amount of monies expended to 30th September, 1891, and the sums then due although not actually paid; (a)—In the purchase of the building; (b)—In the preparation of the ground and foundations, and (c) — Of all other expenditure in connection with the building; also an estimate of the total monies still required, if any, to complete the work?

The Civil Hospital Staff Quarters are not yet completed. Some difficulty has been experienced in getting the contractor to proceed with the work as rapidly as was anticipated. Replies to the remainder of this question will be found in the tabular statement attached. (Preparation of foundations, \$13,272; money expended to 30th September, \$50,734; money due 30th September, \$5,668; amount required to complete, \$8,844, probable date of completion, March, 1892.)

(4.) Is it intended to utilise or convert any portion of the Civil Hospital Staff Quarters building or palace into an addition of the Civil Hospital, and if so, how much, as recommended by the unofficial members in their memorandum addressed to His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government regarding the estimates for public works extraordinary for 1891, and dated 20th December, 1890?

After careful consideration and communication with the Colonial Surgeon it has been found impracticable to convert any portion of the Civil Hospital Staff Quarters into an addition to the Civil Hospital for the direct treatment of patients.

### LUNATIC ASYLUM FOR CHINESE.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD asked the following question, the answer to which is appended:—

(5.)—With reference to the Honourable the Surveyor-General's statement at the meeting of Finance Committee held on 11th December last, to the effect that the building to be used as the Lunatic Asylum for Chinese was well advanced, will the Government lay on the table a statement shewing—when the building was completed; if not completed, why not; and when it will be completed; if completed; when was it occupied; if not occupied, why not; and the total amount

of monies expended to 30th September, 1891, in the purchase of the site and the cost of the building, also the sums then due although not actually paid, and an estimate of the further amount, if any, still required to complete the building?

This building is completed and was occupied on the 26th of September, the patients having been transferred from the European Asylum during the carrying out of repairs to that building. The replies as to expenditure will be found in the tabular statement attached. (Money expended to 30th September, \$17,017; money due, \$1,680)

#### LIGHTHOUSE ON GAP ROCK.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD asked the following questions, the reply to which is appended:—

(6.)—Will the Government inform the Council:—(a) Whether the cable to connect the Lighthouse on Gap Rock with Hongkong has been ordered; (b) If so, when will it be laid; (c) What is the total amount of monies actually expended, including the cost of the *Fame*, in connection with the construction of the Lighthouse works on Gap Rock to 30th September, 1891; (d) The sums due on 30th ultimo although not actually paid; and (e) An estimate of the further amount of money still required to complete the work, and the probable date of completion?

The cable has not yet been ordered. For answers to the rest of this question see tabular statement. Money expended to 30th September, \$152,327; due, \$9,652; required to complete, \$19,000; probable date of completion, March, 1892.

#### SLAUGHTER-HOUSE, SHEEP AND PIG DEPOTS, &C.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD asked the following question—Will the Government lay upon the table a statement shewing the actual amount of money expended to 30th September, 1891, in the purchase of the site, the preparation of foundations, and the construction of the Slaughter-House and Sheep and Pig Depots, the sums then due although not actually paid, and an estimate of the further amount of money still required to complete the building, also the probable date of completion, and will the Government give the Council similar information and particulars regarding the following works:—Site for proposed New Western Market; Shaukiwan Market; Cattle Depot Extension; Public Laundries; Public Latrines; Police Station at Aberdeen; Police Station at Quarry Bay; Police Station at Kennedy Town; District Schools; Quarters for the Superintendent of the Botanical and Afforestation Department; Training Albany Nullah and New Roads and Preparatory Work Kennedy Road Sites; the reconstruction of the Praya Bridge over Bowrington Canal and improvements on Recreation Ground, Happy Valley?

The reply was given in the form of a tabular statement.

#### SURVEYOR-GENERAL'S STAFF.

In reply to a question by the Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD, a return was laid on the table of all officers and others now employed in the Honourable the Surveyor-General's department, with the dates of engagement, terms, and conditions of service, rate of salary, rate of increase and allowances, if any, and a detailed statement of the duties performed by each.

#### THE OPIUM AND GAMBLING ORDINANCES.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said—I have thus dealt with the eight questions which the hon. member asked. Another list of three questions has since been forwarded. As regards the first and second of these the preparation of the answers will involve a very great deal of labour, and I am informed that it will not be possible to answer them for some time. It will occupy two clerks a good many days in endeavouring to ascertain the particulars required. The questions I refer to are:— 'will the Government lay on the table a list of the excise officers appointed by the Governor under Section 5 of the Opium Ordinance of 1884; a statement shewing the number of convictions for offences against the Opium Ordinance from the date of the commencement of the existing opium farm to 30th September last the amount of fines levied; the amount of fines collected; the number of persons imprisoned in default of payment of fine, with the periods of their imprisonment and the cost to Government of their detention in gaol; the number of persons now in prison for such offences; the quantity of opium seized and confiscated during the same period, and how disposed of? Will the Government lay on the table a list of the number of convictions for offences against the new Gambling Ordinance since the date it came into force to 30th September last; the amount of fines levied; the amount of fines collected; the number of persons imprisoned in default of payment of fine, with the periods of their imprisonment and the cost to Government of their detention in gaol; and the number of persons now in prison for such offences?' These in the course of a few weeks it may be possible to answer; the other question I am prepared to answer now if the hon. member will put it.

#### THE PAY OF INDIAN CONSTABLES.

Mr. WHITEHEAD then asked—Will the Government lay upon the table the petition received from the Indian members of the Police Force asking for an increase of pay, and state on what grounds a reasonable increase has been refused, seeing that no increase has been granted the Indian portion of the force since it was raised, while the European members have had three increases and the Chinese one increase?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—His Excellency the Acting Governor, after mature consideration of the petition, decided that there were not sufficient grounds to justify him

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the salary of the men referred to, whose pay compares favourably with that of similar bodies in other places, especially Singapore. His Excellency, in the interests of discipline, deems it inexpedient to publish a petition of this kind, thereby reopening subjects which have received careful consideration by the responsible authorities and have been disposed of.

His EXCELLENCY—I will just mention that the hon. member is not responsible for the very long time that has been taken up in the Council by the answering of these questions, because he expressed his willingness to have them laid upon the table. I thought, however, that it would be desirable to have them read in order that hon. members may realise the enormous trouble and time which has been spent in preparing the answers to those voluminous questions, which have taken three quarters of an hour to read. If these questions are likely to be continued, it will be a serious consideration whether or not the staff of our civil servants is to be increased by a number of men or whether their salaries must be raised—to which I know the hon. member is not partial—in recognition of the extra hours and overtime which this work entails. I may also say that I think with a little trouble a large amount of the information asked is obtainable by a little research in blue books and statements which have already been published.

APPROPRIATION BILL, 1892

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the first reading of the Appropriation Bill for 1892.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

The Bill was read a first time.

THE INCORPORATION OF THE SENIOR MISSIONARY.

Hon. HO KAI—I beg to move that the Council do now go into Committee on the Bill for the incorporation of the senior missionary in Hongkong of the London Missionary Society.

Hon. P. RYRIE—I have much pleasure in seconding it.

The Council then went into Committee.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—I understand that His Excellency is perfectly satisfied with the proof of the appointment of the senior missionary. That was the only matter, I believe, remaining. Satisfactory proof has been furnished and the title deeds have been produced, so that everything is in order, as far as I know.

Hon. HO KAI—There being no alteration in the Bill, I beg to move the third reading.

Hon. P. RYRIE—I second that.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I saw Dr. Chalmers on the Friday and he furnished me with all the necessary credentials of his appointment.

The Bill was read a third time and passed.

THE PREPARED OPIUM ORDINANCE.

The Council went into Committee on this Bill.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL said—The first clause which has to be dealt with is section 8. It was suggested by the senior hon. member at the last meeting of the Council

that some provision should be made for the instant dismissal of every excise officer convicted of giving or accepting a bribe. As the appointment of the excise officers is in the hands of the Governor. I do not think it would be at all advisable to tie his hands in this matter. The Governor must be supposed to do his duty in such matters and some discretion must be left to him. It was also suggested that in the case of an excise officer accepting a bribe \$100 fine was not an appropriate penalty. The section is based on the Police Consolidation Ordinance, where police officers guilty of misconduct or who do not return their uniform and accoutrements on retirement are liable to a fine of \$200 or three months' imprisonment. The excise officer accepting a bribe, I take it, is in a somewhat different position to the police officer guilty of the same offence. The excise officer is really appointed by the Governor to look after the interests of the opium farmer and prevent smuggling and the Government therefore thought that \$100 was sufficient penalty for him apart from any question of whether he be dismissed or not, and I may remind the hon member who commented on this section that if the \$100 fine is not paid it would render any person liable to imprisonment with hard labour, not exceeding six months. However, I propose to add to the section relating to the penalties the words "In addition to any other punishment to which he may be liable." That makes it somewhat more explicit, I think.

Hon. P. RYRIE—I might inform our Acting Attorney-General that \$100 fine on a man who has taken a bribe is an amount which would be freely paid by others; not by him.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—It seems to me that an excise officer who takes a bribe will not be guilty of so great an offence as a police officer who accepts a bribe. By common law taking or offering a bribe is punishable by fine and imprisonment. Here a fine is imposed, and if not paid, imprisonment. The hon. member objects to the fine of only \$100 and thinks that it is not large enough. Will he propose a larger sum? The excise officer is of course in every ordinary case liable to be dismissed. I think that as the appointment is in the Governor's hands it is inexpedient to interfere.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I am inclined to support the remark from the senior non-official member. I think it would be much better if the fine was made \$200 or three months' imprisonment in the discretion of the Magistrate.

Hon. P. RYRIE—I second that. I would like it to be larger. A man can easily get \$100 or \$200.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I propose then that these words be added—"Shall on summary conviction be liable to a penalty not exceeding \$200 or three months imprisonment in the discretion of the Magistrate with or without hard labour."

If the case was very aggravated the Magistrate could deal with it accordingly.

Hon. Ho Kai—I beg to support the amendment. It is immaterial, I think, whether the fine be fixed at \$100 or \$200, but I think it will have a very good effect to confer on the Magistrate the power to impose either fine or imprisonment, because it can be readily understood that in some cases a man might pay his fine out of the bribe he received, and if the Magistrate was satisfied that it was a bad case he could inflict imprisonment without the option of a fine. That would be an adequate punishment, and I think that the Government will support the suggestion that the Magistrate should have this discretion.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—As far as I can see I do not think it is a matter of very great importance, but if the amendment as suggested is put in I think it would be better to differentiate between the case of an excise officer accepting a bribe and the one who omits to surrender his clothes and accoutrements.

The hon. mover and seconder of the amendment agreed to the suggestion and the clause as amended stood part of the Bill.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The next section that stands over is section 9 subsection 3. I believe the hon. member who represents the Chinese suggested that some amendment should be made in the section. The section at present limits the amount of dross opium in the possession of any person to two taels in weight, and the hon. member suggested that some price should be fixed for any excess quantity which any person might have, and might require the dross farmer to take it at that price. I do not propose to insert any fixed price, but the suggestion is a good one and I propose to put in, "The market price of the day." I propose the following amendment at the end of the clause. It reads "Provided that when any person has in his possession any such dross in excess of two taels in weight, upon giving notice thereof to the dross farmer, the dross farmer shall purchase the same from him at the market rate of the day."

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—How is the market price to be fixed when there is only one buyer in the colony?

The COLONIAL TREASURER—You cannot, I am afraid, exactly fix the minimum because we cannot tell from month to month what the price of dross is. It is very difficult to form a market rate.

Hon. Ho Kai—I do not know whether it would be better to put an average market price. If there is no market price at any particular time, reference to past markets might give a fair average.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—I will insert the words "a fair and reasonable rate." I think that will be best.

On Section 10, which provides that no one but the

Opium Farmer shall prepare opium,

The COLONIAL TREASURER said—As I pointed out to the Council on the last occasion, this section is a change from the wording of the old Ordinance inasmuch as it takes away the privilege of granting permission to prepare opium by the Opium Farmer to licensees. It has not been thought desirable to allow licensees to boil opium. The hon. member on my left (Hon. Ho Kai) stated on the last occasion that he thought it would be advisable to allow the farmer to grant licences to certain persons. I have looked into the question again and I have come to the conclusion it would not be advisable. In the first place the licensee would have to boil out of the quantity allowed to the farmer, and secondly he would have to boil on the opium farmer's establishment. If a person was allowed to boil elsewhere there is the objection that the opium would be scattered all over the Colony. Two restrictions must be placed on the licensees: first, they must boil under the Opium Farmer's observation; secondly, the opium must come out of the allowance made to the Opium Farmer. I do not think if these two restrictions are to be enforced it is necessary to alter the section at all. The opium would have to be the Opium Farmer's opium and it would have to be boiled in his establishment.

Hon. P. RYRIE said there was a great difference in the brands of opium. He had reason to believe that the opium from Macao was more appreciated than that boiled in this colony. While he was on his feet he would like to call attention to the mistake his hon. friend on the right (Colonial Treasurer) made with regard to the river steamers on the last occasion. He was informed that several seizures had been made by the watchmen coming from Macao to Hongkong.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD said it appeared to him that it would be a good thing if the Opium Farmer were allowed to grant licences to a limited number of persons. Prepared opium was very much like whiskey in that certain people preferred certain blends, and if persons could not get the blend they wanted from the Opium Farmer there was a very strong inducement and temptation to encourage smuggling in order to get it.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Opium Farmer would hardly allow any person to compete with him in boiling opium unless he was allowed the full profit gained on each chest. If the Opium Farmer found out that people did not like his opium in his own interests he would prepare it by some method that would make it appreciated.

HIS EXCELLENCY—I do not quite understand why the Opium Farmer cannot prepare the different blends required.

Hon. Ho Kai—It is a secret of the trade. He would give thousands of dollars to get hold of it.

The clause was passed without amendment.

On section 32, which deals with searching houses or ships by an excise officer.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL said—I think on the last occasion the hon. member who represents the Chinese asked that a provision should be inserted in the Ordinance for searching excise officers before they entered houses. I was not quite then in a position to inform the Council as to what actually takes place on these occasions. Since then I have made enquiries and I am told that where an opium warrant is directed to a Chinese officer, that officer is searched by the Police before he leaves the Station and informers are searched both before and after entering a house. This practice was in force prior to 1886 and was then directed by the Governor to be continued, and has been in force ever since. As regards the evil which the hon. member says existed, I have some doubt whether there ever has been a case of opium being surreptitiously placed on a person in order to obtain a conviction for illegal possession. The present Acting Captain Superintendent of Police says that he cannot call to mind any case where such a thing has been proved, although it is frequently suggested as a defence. I think it is very doubtful whether such an evil exists, and in view of the precautionary measures taken by the Police, it seems unnecessary to insert any provision in the Ordinance.

Hon. HO KAI—I am informed that though the excise officers are searched in the Police Station they are accompanied to the house to be searched by a number of people, and during the journey from the Station to the house there are a great many opportunities for opium to be passed into their hands. I propose the same amendment as last time, that every officer immediately before entering the house be searched. I have such positive evidence on the point, that I have very little doubt that there are a number of such cases.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I rise to support the amendment. Several Chinese have called upon me, men with very large interests at stake in the Colony, and they confirm almost unanimously what has been stated by the hon. member who has just sat down. During the search a number of persons besides the excise officer and the European constable enter the house. I am told. I scarcely think it is right of the legislature to leave a matter of this kind dependent on a departmental order which may be cancelled at any time. The mischief and evil that may be worked by informers and their associates are dreaded by the respectable Chinese.

The COLONIAL TREASURER—I am sorry I am not able to agree with the views of my hon. friend. In the first place it would be utterly impracticable to carry out what my hon. friend on my left suggests. If every time a house was searched, the officer was to be searched in front of the house, from what I know of Chinese, I think it would be very unlikely that there would be any opium there by the time the officers got upstairs. The police apparently guard against any opium being planted by the officers, and I think

the Council may rest assured that your Excellency or who ever holds the reins of Government here will not treat the inhabitants of this colony so badly as to aid any improper conduct on the part of informers or excise officers by withdrawing any order made by the Police which is useful.

The REGISTRAR-GENERAL—I think there must be some mistake when the hon. member say that a number of Chinese have come to him and complained. As an officer who sees more of Chinese than any other officer in Hongkong, I may say I have never yet had one single complaint with regard to this matter, although I have had complaints of all kinds and descriptions.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL said he thought the insertion of such a provision would be a reflection on the Police and on excise officers.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY said it seemed to him that the suggestion of searching was more or less an insult to the excise officers. There might be black sheep among them but he thought it probable there were also black sheep among those who did not want their houses entered.

The Council then divided on Hon. Ho Kai's amendment:

FOR.	AGAINST.
Hon. T. H. Whitehead	The Surveyor-General
Hon. Ho Kai	The Colonial Treasurer
Hon. P. Ryrie	The Registrar General
	The Acting Attorney-General
	The Acting Colonial Secretary
	His Excellency

The amendment was therefore lost and the clause as it originally stood passed.

On Section 34, which deals with the liabilities of masters owners, and consignees when illicit opium is found on board ship.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL said—I have to propose a slight amendment in this clause. On the last occasion the senior unofficial member was good enough to say that to make the consignee liable was ridiculous. Well, I dare say it is in his mind, but all the same it was put in with an object. The object perhaps is unnecessary on further consideration. There is a similar clause in the Vagrancy Ordinance: there is a similar clause in the Sunday Cargo Working Ordinance. In this case it is perhaps not necessary, because if any opium is found on board the master will naturally be get-at-able. I therefore propose to omit the word consignee from the section. The Government have given a good deal of consideration to this clause, and if ship-owners and those interested would only meet the Opium Farmer and would allow his excise officers to go on board the Government might delete the clause altogether. The clause as it stands however, is really no hardship, because if reasonable

and proper precautions are taken no liability attaches.

The COLONIAL TREASURER—I may say that I have very recently made enquiries from a gentleman who has as good opportunities for knowing the subject as anyone can have, and he informs me that something like 20 chests are smuggled in from Macao every month. The profit made on each of these chests is about \$600. Therefore, \$12,000 a month, or \$144,000 a year, is the loss to the Opium Farmer on this account alone.

Hon. P. RYRIE—I should like to know the name of the gentleman who gave you that information, because I am certain it is incorrect.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I move that this clause stand over for further consideration. I am not prepared to move any amendment at present, but I think the clause is capable of modification. To make owners and agents responsible for their officers and servants on board ship is, I think, carrying legislation a little too far. I think it is very wrong that owners and agents should be liable to fine and conviction for what takes place on board and what they are powerless to help.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Surely it is not too much to ask that they should take reasonable precautions.

Hon. P. RYRIE—The consignee gives his order to his subordinates. Your Excellency cannot think that the consignee is going on board the ship to search for opium. I beg to second the motion that the clause stand over.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—The Government have come to the conclusion that they must pass this Bill through Committee to-day. When the Bill comes to be read a third time if any hon. member has any specific amendment it will be quite open to him to move that the Bill be recommitted.

Hon. P. RYRIE—That's all right, but you will hear from the Chamber of Commerce before long.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD withdrew his amendment, substituting therefor that the clause be expunged.

Hon. P. RYRIE seconded.

The Council divided:—

FOR.	AGAINST.
Hon. T. H. Whitehead	The Acting Surveyor-General
Hon. Ho Kai	The Colonial Treasurer
Hon. P. Ryrie	The Registrar-General
	The Acting Attorney-General
	The Act. Colonial Secretary
	His Excellency

The amendment was therefore lost and the original clause was passed. The remaining clauses elicited no discussion and the Bill passed through Committee.

THE RAW OPIUM BILL.

The third reading of this Bill was postponed in order that it might be read concurrently with the Prepared Opium Bill.

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING CONSOLIDATION BILL.

The Council went into Committee on this Bill.

Hon. P. RYRIE—I beg to ask for further delay in proceeding with this Bill. It is a most important Bill and it requires most careful consideration by the Chamber of Commerce. They are considering it now and they have not yet got through with it.

HIS EXCELLENCY—I have to-day received a deputation from the Chamber of Commerce on this subject. I was asked to sanction the postponement of the consideration of this Bill as the Chamber of Commerce had not yet considered it. They have only had one assembly and considered it for two hours. They considered it a very important Bill in the interests of the shipping community and that it should not be hurried through Committee. No reason was given to me where the Bill was found to be defective or contrary to the interests of shipping, and I could only reply that so far from the Bill being hurried through it was read a first time on the 31st July, it was published in the *Gazette* on the 1st August, nearly three weeks elapsed before the second reading, it was read a second time on the 17th August, when the hon. member who moved the second reading pointed out the most important alterations and invited all those interested in it to consider it during the next six or seven weeks when there was no session of the Legislative Council. The Council assembled about the 12th October; we are now at the 26th October. The Bill has therefore been in the hands of those who might wish to consider it for nearly three months, and I can only say if this Bill so vitally affects shipping interests I am surprised that three months have been allowed to pass and only at the last moment has the Chamber devoted two hours' consideration to it. Government work cannot be proceeded with in this way. In this case I have been asked what reason there is for passing this Bill now, I can only say that this Bill is the embodiment of nine different Ordinances scattered about over books which are very inconvenient to refer to. Many improvements with which this Bill deals have been introduced into England and are necessary here. A Bill of this kind is not prepared by officers of the Government without the interests of those concerned being considered. No reason has been put forward why any one clause of this Bill is undesirable. The Bill will be taken clause by clause in Committee, and three months having been given for consideration I do not see any reason why we should not proceed with it at once.

Hon. P. RYRIE—It has taken the Government eighteen months to prepare the Bill.

HIS EXCELLENCY—I may mention that the original hurrying forward of the Bill—it has not been hurried now—was at the urgent instance of the senior unofficial member.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—When I was Attorney-General, the hon. member was frequently asking when we were going to introduce that long delayed Bill and now that it is introduced he does not want it.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—It has been suggested that we are hurrying through this Bill. Nothing is further from the wishes of the Government. The chief questions it is apprehended will arise will be on the regulations contained in the schedules. Most of the clauses have long been recognised and have not been amended at all. Surely these might be considered now and any controversial questions held over. The bill is a very long one and it would be convenient to get over a lot of common ground as soon as possible.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I rise to second the motion of the senior unofficial member. It is desirable that this Bill should be most carefully considered by those intimately acquainted with the requirements of the shipping trade. The shipping trade is the backbone, the life, I may say the existence of this Colony, and I submit that ample time should be given to consider a Bill which affects that trade. I think there has been some misunderstanding with regard to the Chamber of Commerce dealing with the Bill. It has been discussed amongst other important matters at three or four meetings, and on the day referred to two hours were devoted to its consideration alone, but your Excellency is no doubt aware a large amount of technical knowledge is requisite to do the matter justice. I have no doubt your Excellency will bear in mind that the members of the Committee are men whose hands are full and they cannot all always be present at these meetings. I sincerely hope your Excellency will not hurry through an important measure like this against the wishes of those most directly interested in the Bill, for this reason, that when a number of men of wide experience have fully considered clause by clause of this measure time will be really saved in Committee. If your Excellency will give us five or six weeks more to permit of our going into the matter thoroughly and more effectively than they have yet been able to do I feel sure it will save time when we come into Committee. The House of Commons fortunately does not lend itself to rapid legislation and it is all the better for that. This is a formidable piece of work covering 56 pages closely printed matter. Another important reason for asking for an adjournment of the consideration of this Bill is the probable absence of Hon. Mr. Keswick, who is, I understand, leaving in a few days for a short holiday, and who if present would be able to give us the benefit of his practical experience and knowledge of shipping. Another unofficial member is also absent, who will be here perhaps in a few weeks, and on these grounds alone I think your Excellency would be fully justified in postponing consideration of this Bill.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—It does seem to me that if the Chamber of Commerce had any objection to raise they might have raised it before. Ninth-tenths of the Bill are simply the old Ordinances put in a convenient form.

I do not see why we should not deal with these clauses now, and if there is any clause which the Chamber of Commerce would like to stand over consideration of it can be adjourned. The Bill has been before the community for three months and now the Chamber of Commerce want us to stop legislation because forsooth, they have just decided that they want to consider the Bill.

The Council divided on the motion for postponing the consideration of the Bill:—

FOR.	AGAINST.
Hon. T. H. Whitehead	The Acting Surveyor-General
Hon. Ho Kai	The Colonial Treasurer
Hon. P. Ryrie	The Registrar-General
	The Acting Attorney-General
	The Act. Colonial Secretary
	His Excellency

The amendment was therefore lost.

Hon. Ho Kai moved the adjournment of the Council.

Hon P. RYRIE seconded.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I may say that I notice with regret and sorrow the hostile remarks of the Acting Colonial Secretary with regard to the Chamber of Commerce. Feelings have been expressed by the hon. member which I am grieved should exist in the minds of the officials towards the inhabitants.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I am obliged to the hon. member for his remark. It is always pleasant to be an object of pity, but I was not aware that I made any remark, disparaging to the Chamber of Commerce. It is very annoying to officials who have taken a great deal of time and trouble with a Bill to have it postponed in this way.

Hon. P. RYRIE—The officials are very well paid for their trouble.

HIS EXCELLENCY—As the hour is late I will not oppose the adjournment, on the understanding that more use will be made of the next week than has been made of the last three months in the consideration of the details of the Bill by those who wish to discuss them. At all events that portion of the Bill which we may reasonably hope to get through at one sitting might be considered by them in the interval. Any clauses in regard to which reasonable ground can be shown for the postponement of their discussion can be so postponed.

The Council then adjourned.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

At the conclusion of the Council meeting, a meeting of the Finance Committee was held. The Acting Colonial Secretary presided.



The CHAIRMAN moved a vote of \$640 for salaries and uniform of four Chinese constables for cemeteries.

Agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN moved a vote for \$679 for the purchase of a Nordenfeldt gun and 1,000 rounds of ammunition for the *Charles May*. The gun they had at present was lent by the Admiralty

and they wanted it back. It therefore became necessary to purchase one in its place.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Could they not use one of the many idle and unused Maxim guns? They are not likely to be wanted for some time if at all. (Laughter).

The vote was agreed to.

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