

7TH DECEMBER, 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. W. C. H. HASTINGS, Acting Harbour Master.

Hon. P. RYRIE.

Hon. HO KAI.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.

Mr. A. M. THOMSON, Acting Clerk of Councils.

MR. WHITEHEAD ON THE CIVIL SERVICE.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Your Excellency, I have carefully thought over the suggestion which you made at our last meeting that I should postpone for a time the resolution of which I have given notice. I regret that I cannot in justice to the ratepayers acquiesce in your Excellency's wishes, as the matter is one of very great importance and is becoming more so every day. I hope I will convince your Excellency before I sit down of the necessity of allowing the commission asked for. The cost of the administration of this Colony is constantly increasing and has risen from \$547,000 four years ago to \$758,000 this year. There seems to be no finality to the growth of the departments. Almost every year sees some fresh addition, evidently because occupation must be found for our cadets. Fresh batches of cadets are imported and occupation must be found for them whether there is actual work to do or not. Speaking of the cost of administration in this Council in April last I said:

"The unofficial members have cordially recognized

the propriety and justice of an increase of salaries. It was on their recommendation it was authorized, they are not wavering on that point, but on second thoughts they begin to doubt the ability of the colony to pay the increased rate of salaries over a course of years and the wisdom of granting them, if in a few years they may have to be reduced. I am of opinion that the officers of the Government have fair grounds for asking for an increase of salaries, if the colony can afford to pay such increase, but I think the Council ought to be satisfied not only that it is able to pay them this year and next but for some years to come."

In December last, in reply to Mr. Keswick, Mr. Fleming said:

"The hon. member has said it may be necessary within a year or two to bring about a different change from what is proposed to bring about to-day. There is no doubt the increase it is proposed to give now amounts to a very considerable sum, and it may be that the circumstances of the Colony may change, and that in consequence of such a change it may be necessary at a subsequent period to move that instead of salaries being raised they should be reduced. We know such has been the case in other Colonies in recent years, in Mauritius for one."

His Excellency Sir William Des Voeux, in his undelivered speech of the 30th April, went on to say:

"As the estimates which contain these increased salaries are only voted for one year, the Council will, of course, be at full liberty to reconsider the position with reference to the estimates of 1892, and public officers will understand that though these salaries may be fixed at a given amount for this year, it does not follow that they will remain at that figure for next or any subsequent year should the circumstances of the Colony require a reduction. \* \* \* All things considered, therefore, I am by no means sure that some of the increases of salaries do not require reconsideration."

These were the remarks of Sir William Des Voeux. My hon. friend opposite, Mr. Keswick, informed the Council at the last meeting that he had not come prepared to discuss the financial situation. I hope the hon. member is ready to-day to give the Council the benefit of his deliberations, his wide experience and knowledge. I cannot offer any stronger argument in support of the resolution standing in my name to-day than the argument used by the hon. member (Mr. Keswick) in April last, which is as follows:

"As I said in this Council on a former occasion, it is a very ungrateful and unpleasant task to discuss questions like this, which in some respects is personal, or at all events has a personal application, but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that, as I mentioned in this Council in December last, a mistake has been made in the amount of the increase of

salaries recommended. The amount recommended by the Committee was only \$10,000 and instead of that sum, which would have shewn a very moderate percentage of increase, salaries have been increased up to the amount of 35 per cent. I quite feel that it is desirable in the public interest to tackle this question without delay and recognize that a mistake has been made, and ought to be remedied while there is yet time, and it is for that reason I take advantage of the opportunity now afforded me, which I did not expect to have in December. I feared the matter was then complete. I think all the unofficial members felt with myself that a right and proper increase of salaries was necessary. I feel so still. But the resolution of my hon. friend opposite reads that in consequence of the enhanced military contribution the colony cannot pay the increased salaries recommended. I view the matter quite differently and consider that it is in consequence of a great many extraordinary expenses we have that we are unable to grant this increase. I suppose there never was a time in the history of the colony when the enormous demands for public works and general expenditure were so great in comparison with its shrinking revenue. I am satisfied that the revenue of the colony is declining and it is on these grounds I consider this increase to official salaries of 35 per cent. should be reconsidered, and what may be regarded as an adequate increase only be given in its place. I am not aware that there is anything I need say further in moving the amendment except that I do so on the grounds that the motion of the hon. member is not wide enough in its scope. I would therefore propose, Sir, the following amendment be adopted that in consequence of the increase to official salaries being greatly in excess of what was contemplated by the Committee specially appointed to consider the subject, and the ever growing Government establishments to which the increase would apply, and in view of the fact that the declining revenue will not be equal to so great a strain upon it for the enormous public works in progress, besides the other impending and urgent necessities of the colony and the increased military contribution, it is desirable that the Secretary of State be asked by telegram to withhold his sanction to the proposed increase until the amount can be reconsidered.'

The hon. member who represents the Chinese cordially supported that amendment. I would now turn to the revenue estimated for next year, as I see that from three items alone an increase of over \$700,000 is estimated over the amount derived from the same items in the present year. Opium this year yielded \$387,600, and for next year it is put down at \$519,000. Land sales this year were \$49,500, next year they are put down at \$100,000. Chair and other licences, \$20,000 in 1891, are put down at \$45,000 in 1892. Now, sir, I am very doubtful if these figures will be realised, b u t I h o p e

they may be. The Imperial Maritime Customs reports show an increase in trade and in shipping, but I think, sir, every merchant in the place will tell you that trade is still bad and unprofitable. Three causes have hit the Colony very hard and we are not yet in a position to determine their outcome. These were pointedly indicated by Sir William Des Voeux when he stated:

"At the present moment we are suffering largely not merely from over speculation, but to a considerable extent from three causes which hit us extremely hard. One is the restrictive legislation against Chinese in Australia and America; the second is the increased cultivation of the poppy in China, which diminishes our opium imports; and the third is the decline in the export of Chinese tea owing to the competition of India and Ceylon. There can be no question but that these three circumstances have hit us very hard."

Now, sir, I would turn to the expenditure side of the balance sheet and I see Government figures show a deficit in our budget at the end of 1892 of over \$300,000. It is nine years and nine months today since our late Governor Sir John Pope-Hennessy left these shores. Since that date we have had two Governors here, Sir George Bowen and Sir William Des Voeux. Each governed the Colony for two years, or just a trifle over four years between them. For the other five years and eight months they were absent and Hongkong was governed by the Officer Commanding the Troops or the Colonial Secretary. During these nine years and nine months we have paid \$283,000, and in return for this money the ratepayers have had the privilege, the honour, and the benefit of the Governor's presence in the Colony for four years and about six weeks, or on an average our Governor has been in the Colony attending to his duties for say five months out of every twelve. I very much fear these two Governors have unintentionally and unwittingly done the Colony and the ratepayers some harm and some injustice by writing and talking up the Colony in brilliant despatches and otherwise. They failed, I think, to realise our true position, which I can assure your Excellency financially is not a strong one, and I say so without fear of contradiction. The outcome of this boasting and bragging has resulted in increased Imperial military exactions, arbitrarily seized and unjustly taken from the Treasury by means of the more numerous official vote and in opposition to the views and wishes of every ratepayer in the Colony. There is a strong feeling in the city that a number of Government offices might well and usefully be abolished, including that of the Registrar-General, and the work redistributed among other offices, while others might well be amalgamated. The Chamber of Commerce expressed their views on the point in no uncertain terms a few months ago, when they sent in a letter to the Government with regard to the registering of cargo boats, etc.:

"Paragraph 2 points out that my Committee erroneously

included in Harbour Master's revenue the amount received for the 12 months of 1890 for

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|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Registry of Boats.....        | \$4,631.50  |
| Registry Cargo Boats.....     | 6,272.50    |
| Cargo Boats' Certificate..... | 1,192.50    |
|                               | \$12,096.50 |

because this branch of the service was conducted by the Registrar-General's department, and therefore the income was applicable to that establishment. The Chamber's error was natural, for it appears anomalous that work so intimately connected with the Harbour Department should be done by a branch of the service so unfitted, apparently, to conduct the operations required of it. The additional work, if thrown on the Harbour Master's department to grant these three forms of certificates, could doubtless be performed without further aid of any kind, or at the most trifling assistance only would be needed by that branch. \* \*

"The cargo boat strike is well within the memory of my Committee. It arose from injudicious action on the part of the Government. His Excellency called to his aid, one afternoon, many members of the community, amongst them some of my Committee, to obtain their views on the situation. His Excellency adopted the suggestions that were then tendered, and the following morning the strike had disappeared." I think, sir, it has been demonstrated beyond all possibility of doubt that one Police Magistrate can do the work, and do it well and to the satisfaction of everybody, though hitherto we have invariably had two Police Magistrates. The hon. member opposite, the Assistant Harbour Master, seems to have no difficulty whatever in carrying out the duties of Harbour Master, Assistant Harbour Master, Superintendent of the Water Police, and member of this Council. It has also been suggested the Gaol and Police might well be put under one head, and the Treasury and Post Office might be put under one head, the Surveyor-General's and the Water and Drainage departments under another, and so on. Turning to the question of official hours, these are from ten to four. I do not think it would be any great hardship if these were extended from nine or half-past nine to half-past four or five, as in mercantile offices, where clerks have no two months' holiday annually or pensions to look forward to. Turning to leave regulations, I think they might very well be assimilated to what is laid down in Colonial Office Regulation No. 133, whereby the leave would be reduced from four months to three months in every two years. The taxpayers are now paying a very large percentage to absent officials. I noticed in one of our papers the other day, namely, the *Hongkong Telegraph*,

the other £32,000. Officers are absent: Colonial Secretary, \$9,720; Clerk of Councils, \$1,296; Chief Clerk, \$3,240; Assistant Registrar-General, \$3,240; Harbour Master, \$5,400; Puisne Judge, \$8,400; Police Magistrate, \$5,184; Coroner, \$972; Captain Superintendent of Police, \$6,375; Governor of Victoria Gaol, \$4,146; Assistant Postmaster, \$2,400; Chief Inspector of Police, \$1,680; Attorney-General, \$7,800; Superintendent Fire Brigade, \$1,320; aggregating \$98,153. I think, sir, it might also be well to stop the further import of cadets, for the present at all events and until there is some revival in trade, some recovery in values, some evidence that the sad fate which befel the island of St. Thomas, with which Sir William Des Voeux threatened us, will not be ours. Before further cadets are got out I think the sanction of the Legislative Council should be obtained for the expenditure, the same as for any other expenditure. The Colonial Secretary the other day endeavoured to burk discussion on the all important question of expenditure in connection with the Appropriation Bill and said he considered it a farce to go over the various items again. I can assure the hon. gentleman the taxpayers do not think it any farce to find the money for the heavy taxes levied upon them. I regret extremely that my hon. friend who represents the Justices of the Peace is not here to-day to give us the benefit of his wide and long experience of the Colony. On the morning of his departure for Tonkin he called at my office and left me a press copy of the letter he addressed to the Government on the subject of this resolution. It reads as follows:

"Hongkong, 13th December, 1891.

"The Hon. W. Meigh Goodman, Acting Colonial Secretary.

"Sir Mr. Whitehead's resolution asking for the appointment of a commission to enquire into the question of the constantly increasing cost of the maintenance of the Administrative Staff of this Colony is shortly to be brought forward, and as I shall then be absent. I have the honour to address you by letter on this subject.

"There is no doubt that there is a strong feeling prevalent in the Colony that this increase, the figures of which are given in the wording of Mr. Whitehead's resolution, is assuming alarming and disproportionate dimensions. On this point I offer no opinion; but I am certainly in favour of the passing of Mr. Whitehead's resolution, and on the following grounds. Should such a commission as he asks for be appointed, the question will be carefully and thoroughly examined in all its bearings. If the decision arrived at is that the increasing cost is indispensable without interfering with the administrative working of the Colony, the public will be satisfied that such is really the case, the feeling of which I have spoken will be dispelled, and things will go on more harmoniously. On the other hand, if the commission decides that there is room for retrenchment, the Colony will then be afforded an opportunity for curtailing expenditure at a time when the

financial outlook is not of the brightest.

"These, sir, are my reasons for supporting Mr. Whitehead's resolution. I am, sir, your most obedient servant.

"(Signed) C. P. CHATER".

These, sir, are Mr. Chater's reasons for supporting the resolution now before the Council. I am convinced every member of this Council feels in his inner consciousness the necessity for retrenchment and reform in the system of the Government of this British Colony. The system is at fault undoubtedly. On behalf of the ratepayers of Hongkong I earnestly beseech and entreat your Excellency to grant the prayer of the resolution now before the Council. By so doing your Excellency will place the ratepayers under a lasting debt of gratitude to your administration. The resolution reads as follows:

"That in consequence of the fact that the cost of the Administrative Staff of the Government of Hongkong is constantly increasing, having risen from \$547,650 in 1887 to the enormous amount of \$758,139 in 1891 and to the still larger estimated sum of about \$800,000 for 1892 exclusive of \$65,200 for pensions for 1892, it is incumbent on the unofficial members of Council, being the lawfully constituted guardians of the public purse, to earnestly consider and strenuously urge upon the Government the necessity for retrenchment in every possible direction, more especially when it is remembered that the Colony's financial position is not strong, that we are threatened with a shrinkage in its revenue in the near future, and that our position with reference to opium and the revenue derived therefrom is precarious, I beg to move that Government appoint a Commission composed of members exclusive of Government officials with full powers to enquire into and report on the working of all the Departments of the Government with the view to retrenchment, and to the desirability or otherwise of the redistribution of work, the amalgamation of certain offices, the increasing of the hours of the official day, privileges in the way of leave, &c."

Hon. P. RYRIE—Your Excellency, I rise to second the resolution of my hon. friend on the right. He has treated the matter in so exhaustive a manner that it is not necessary for me to say much. I will only say he has adduced some very cogent reasons why the commission he asks for should be appointed. I think it is necessary that we should strain every nerve to reduce expenditure by the amalgamation of offices or any other means. There is no doubt the expenditure is increasing alarmingly and the reason ought to be carefully sought and reported upon. I beg to second the resolution of my hon. friend.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—Your Excellency, on the last occasion the hon.

member was asked not to bring forward this resolution on the present occasion, because it was on the very eve of the arrival of a new Governor, and His Excellency administering the Government temporarily and being about to be relieved of that duty by Sir William Robinson could not undertake to sanction such a formidable and wholesale inquiry as seemed to be suggested by the resolution of the hon. member, who was informed that if he brought on his resolution at this meeting it would be negatived. He was asked to consider the matter and he does not seem to have thought it worth while to inform the Government whether he intended to bring it forward or not. I heard nothing from him that gave me the idea he was going to bring it on to day, and I rather assumed he was not going to do so. The hon. gentleman having come with one of his carefully prepared speeches bristling with figures and a resolution teeming with recitals, some of which are quite erroneous, cannot expect an answer on the spur of the moment and without reference to authorities to all the statements he has thought fit to make. There would be little difficulty in refuting the statements with a little time for preparation. For instance, to take the first one, with reference to the Water and Drainage Department, the great bulk of the employés in that department are only engaged for three years. If the Colony undertakes enormous works like the sewerage works that are going on now, the Colony must expect to pay for it and get a large staff out to superintend the work. Of this the hon. member must be well aware, and I think it is very unfair on the part of a gentleman familiar with financial affairs to present the case in the way he has done. He puts himself forward as the representative of the ratepayers, whom he appears to take under his peculiar care and attention. The hon. member seems to suppose he is the only person concerned with the ratepayers. He seems to have a private understanding with all of them. He tells us they think this, that, and the other, I do not know on what grounds, but that is the kind of thing. One cannot meet serious allegations of this kind, replying on the spur of the moment without some consideration. I would remind the hon. member that he has been informed by his Excellency that if he brought this resolution on to-day it could not be entertained. If he desired nothing further than to fire off a speech which might be reported at length and which might be thought a very creditable speech by the ratepayers, who are not acquainted with the facts, having delivered that speech quite unexpectedly in Council I presume the hon. member is satisfied. I do not suppose he expected the Government was to be handed over to him and two or three other gentlemen, that the Secretary of State was to be deposed, and these gentlemen rule the roast entirely. I do not suppose he expected that for one moment and therefore he did not expect his resolution to be carried. However, we have heard the speech. The hon. member charged me with having tried to burke reconsideration of the items of the Appropriation Bill on the last occasion. That is a very unfair statement. I put it to the gentlemen here, I will ask them who was in the wrong. The hon. member did not pay attention to the rules of the house. He

let his opportunity go by and then he asked, as a favour, to have the Bill recommitted in order to raise a lot of objections he did not raise in Finance Committee. Now I look round the table and I ask hon. members who was in the wrong, he or I? That statement is a sample of the statements made by him. Then there is another statement, he says the Colony pays \$98,000 for officers that are absent, that is, \$98,000 for which no value is received. He mentions the Attorney-General as being absent.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Away from his post.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—You said absent! I am very much here. I have no preference for the post I am at present holding, I am perfectly willing to return to my own post any moment. The office of the Attorney-General is admirably conducted at the present moment. The ratepayers are losing nothing at all. The colony has the services of Mr. Leach and I am not aware that anyone has found fault.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I do not do so.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—The hon. member says he does not, therefore that is one instance in which the ratepayers are losing nothing; and I am doing my best to fill the post of Colonial Secretary for a gentleman absent from the Colony, who has worked hard as the hon. member would be the first to admit. Does the hon. member suppose that Englishmen will come out to Hongkong, to a climate like this which is not the most admirable in the world, to work incessantly without any holidays? Does he suppose that any gentleman in England would take such a post unless he could have some vacation? The Secretary of State, wiser than the hon. member, knows he must hold out reasonable inducements to gentlemen in England to come here, and one of the inducements is that they should have two months' holiday in the year. There is a great misunderstanding about those two months. It is laid down in the regulations that you cannot get your two months unless you provide a substitute, that substitute to be to the satisfaction of the Governor, and it is sometimes extremely difficult for them to get away, for the very good reason that they cannot get anyone to do their work unless they pay him. Very often when a gentleman is supposed to be on vacation leave he is paying a considerable sum to his substitute, who has to possess qualifications to the satisfaction of the Governor. I do not know that I should go into all these details.

because I say one cannot answer such a speech, which deals with figures, on the spur of the moment, but the hon. member's object in flaunting \$98,000 before the ratepayers, I should say the inhabitants, I am a ratepayer, we are all ratepayers; everybody pays some duties. I suppose if a man drinks a glass of whiskey and water some duty is paid on that. Well, perhaps not in this Colony, though it would be so in England, but those who have houses pay rates. The members of the Government service have to pay rates just like any one else, and it is sickening cant to talk "ratepayers" incessantly. My belief is the hon. member's desire in stating \$98,000 was expended was to make the ratepayers suppose that \$98,000 was paid to persons who did nothing for it, who were away on leave. That is a very erroneous statement. The work is all being done for which that money is paid and the persons who are away for a short time are away to regain strength properly to perform their duties when they return. I take it in the Banks the employés have sometimes to have holidays and that there are acting appointments I should like to know if there are never acting appointments in the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank. It is all put forward for the purpose of making it appear that the Government is doing quite wrong, that the ratepayers are being wronged, and one gets sick of hearing this. It is quite possible to say nothing when such allegations are made, but if you say nothing you are told you cannot answer them and very prudently remain silent. I would only say there are many points that might be brought forward in answer. Gentlemen from England would not come out to this Colony if they were to be entirely under the thumb of the Hon. T. H. Whitehead or anybody else. They come out here under certain terms. The Secretary of State employs them and the Secretary of State keeps those terms. If they found they were to be at the mercy of two or three unofficial members, who might be in a bad temper because something had happened which did not please them. I do not suppose they would come. I do not propose to say anything further except that the hon. member has made his speech, and he was told if he made it to-day the resolution would be negatived. If he had chosen to make it on a future occasion he might have had it more fully discussed.

Hon. P. RYRIE—He said nothing about not bringing it forward.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—He said he would reconsider it.

Hon. P. RYRIE—No man goes away in any leading bank or company here without paying half his salary for the privilege. It is done in all the Insurance Offices.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I must apologise to your Excellency and the Council for having unintentionally and unwittingly misunderstood your Excellency at the last meeting. Had I understood I was expected to write to the Government, I would not have failed to do so. It was entirely a misunderstanding on my part, for which I express regret. Further, I resent the imputations cast upon

me by the hon. member, I do not think it would have any good effect to go into them *seriatim*, and therefore I decline to enter into the controversy.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Before closing this discussion, I would just mention two or three points on which the hon. member, no doubt unintentionally, has rather misled those who may read his remarks. I do so with a view of showing that the Government is quite alive to the duty incumbent on it, wherever it considers appointments may be done away with or economy practised, and that they are not always considering how much they can spend and how many more appointments they can make or how many salaries they can raise. It was mentioned as one of the reasons why this commission should be appointed that there was a continual flow of cadets, that they are coming out regularly, and appointments have to be found for them. Now, in answer to that I wish distinctly to say that is not the case. Since I have held this post I have been asked by the Secretary of State if any more cadets were required for the Colony at present. My answer has been no, although that looks forward probably for two or three years. I have stated there is no requirement for a cadet and therefore the flow of cadets has been stopped. That is one point on which the hon. member has misrepresented the action of the Government. Another point that it is supposed this commission would recommend is the amalgamation of appointments where possible, which this Government is supposed never to be alive to. In answer to that I beg to say I have strongly recommended to the Secretary of State that the appointments of Resident Engineer and Surveyor-General should be amalgamated. (Applause.) Then with reference to a few statements made with regard to the revenue, which rather tended to throw discredit on those who framed the estimates, as though they had been careless or too sanguine in their estimates. I should like to mention three points which occur to me. First of all with regard to the largest item, the opium monopoly, the revenue from which is said to be \$130,000 over that of the present year. The real fact is the estimate for the ensuing year is exactly the sum which the present Opium Farmer undertook to give when he took the Farm and which he did give for two years. It is increased only apparently by the anticipated receipt during the year 1892 of a postponed portion of the rent for the year 1891. Owing to special circumstances the farmer, not being able to carry out his engagement, was allowed to postpone a large payment due for this year, which is covered by security, and it will become payable in 1892, and therefore it is shown under  
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for that year, but it is not assumed the revenue will be increased by that amount. Then with regard to land sales, I am told we have estimated \$100,000 whereas this year the actual receipts are estimated not to exceed half that. I can only say \$100,000, the modest estimate we have taken for the ensuing year, I am speaking from memory, but I believe I am correct, is as low an estimate as has been made for several years and three times less than was made two years ago, and there is no reason at all why it should not be more than realised. The other item mentioned is for licences and is shown to be increased from \$20,000 to \$45,000. These figures must always be approximate, but within ordinary approximation there is every reason to believe the figures will turn out correct. I thought it right to make these few observations to show that the Government are not so entirely wrong and that they are alive to what are their duties. There is one phrase in the resolution which made me anxious that this resolution should be postponed. Others might point out in a better way than I could the error which I think underlies the phrase that the unofficial members of this Council are the lawfully constituted guardians of the public purse. I do not follow that. I think if this resolution had been postponed until next week the error of that would probably have been shown more successfully than I can do it.

Hon. Ho KAI—Is the discussion closed?

His EXCELLENCY intimated he would be glad to hear the hon. member.

Hon. Ho KAI—I do not wish to prolong the discussion, but as you were about to put the resolution to the vote I simply wished to state my reason for voting one way or the other. I do not follow the proposer of this resolution in all the reasons he has given but simply go upon the main reason, namely, that the finances of the colony are in a bad state. Everyone must admit that, and every merchant feel it in his office. I for one thoroughly believe the statement that the financial state of the colony is bad to be a true one, and that next year you will have a great deficit, and any reasonable means by which you can practice economy and cut down expenses so as to enable us to tide over our difficulties ought to be adopted. When the colony has resumed its former prosperity we will be able to expand and be more generous. Consequently it is on the main question alone that I support the resolution. I wanted to say that, because with some of the reasons given by the mover of the resolutions I do not specially agree.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK—Your Excellency, the hon. member who proposed this resolution made the remark that he hoped I had come prepared to deliver myself on the subject

of the financial position of the Colony. I may say I do not think I am called upon to go into that matter or that it would be of any particular value that I should do so at the present time, but I may say I am still prepared to adhere to my remarks made last April on the subject of expenditure generally, and I am in favour of the practice of all those economies which may come to our hand from time to time, especially when considering the estimates. But I must say I do not find that this resolution is by any means one to which I can give my support. It involves a very great deal that I do not think has anything to do with the vital point of economy in the spending of the revenues of this Colony. In fact I think it contains an initial error, just as the resolution did a year ago with reference to the reduction of salaries. I have no doubt we do in this Colony spend an immense amount of money unnecessarily, but I cannot conceive that a cheeseparing policy, which I gather to be that that this resolution is intended to recommend, is one that is worthy of the dignity of the unofficial members of this Council to bring forward or worthy of the Colony, that is to say the reduction of expenditure in every department, which would prevent the work being carried on in a large and liberal manner. To pay generous salaries for generous work I am sure is the best way of getting the public work satisfactorily done. The hon. member who proposed the resolution made a reference to a shrinking revenue, and I think it exceedingly probable that there may be a very great shrinkage of revenue. I remarked on a former occasion that I did not consider the revenue of this Colony very elastic and I am still of that opinion. We have not those numerous sources of revenue that are found elsewhere. There is no constantly increasing industrial life. We do not see manufacturers coming from Canton, as I would like to see them, and which would lead to the enlargement of our revenue and the increase in the value of our land. But though it is true our revenues are not elastic, on the other hand, I do not think a shrinkage is to be feared to that point at which our necessary expenditure will be in excess of our revenue. I am disposed to think that so long as we do not throw away our money in moments of enthusiasm on great public works, we are not likely to outrun the constable. I think we may perfectly well, by economical expenditure on public works, keep within the figures of our income. The hon. gentleman has referred, I think, more than once to the strong feeling which he says the ratepayers have on this subject. He will excuse me for referring to this point ~~before he has proposed it~~ <sup>before he has proposed it</sup> ~~for which he has proposed it~~ <sup>for which he has proposed it</sup> ~~controversy~~ <sup>controversy</sup> the hon. member may have taken pains to see an immense number of ratepayers on this subject whom I have not seen, yet I am bound to say I have never heard any opinion expressed with regard to the extravagance of the public offices.

Hon T. H. WHITEHEAD—Mr. Chater made that statement in his letter which I read, and I fully concur in it.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK—I quite accept the correction and I hope the hon. member will understand I do not say this for the purpose of raising a controversy, but I really do not believe there is any abandonment on the part of the residents of this Colony of those ordinary lines of good common sense which tells them that some expenditure of money must go on and that the offices of the Government should be filled with the best men that money can get. The extravagances to which they take objection are those on public works. I certainly have heard very strong remarks, for example, on the subject of the new gaol, and if the hon. gentleman had included in his resolution anything with reference to this special expenditure, I would have been very willing to give it my support so far as that was concerned, also I dare say on various other items, but I do not find I can support the resolution as it now stands. I would like to suppose for an instant that we had before us at the present moment an enormous public work like that of Tytam. My hon. friend opposite (Hon. P. Ryrie) will be able to call to mind the estimates for that work. What would have been the position if the unofficial members had come forward with what I cannot but call a rather narrow resolution like this pointing to what I call cheeseparings? It would have been impossible for our predecessors on such lines as that to have faced manfully that great public work. I say you cannot carry out great public works of that kind on narrow huckstering lines. While urging on the Government the necessity of economy, I regret I am unable, owing to what I consider its inherent defects, to support this resolution.

A division was then taken, when there voted for the resolution Hon. T. H. Whitehead, Hon. Ho Kai, and Hon. P. Ryrie, and against it Hon. J. J. Keswick and all the official members.

#### THE BUILDING ORDINANCE.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The first item on the orders of the day is the third reading of the Building Ordinance. I understand however that the Acting Surveyor-General desires that the Bill should be recommitted as there are certain slight amendments, chi fly verbal, which he desires to make in clause 11 and clause 15 of the schedule.

The Council then went into Committee on the Bill.

On section 15, which gives power to the Surveyor-General to partially stop or divert the traffic along any road for the purpose of carrying out works of a public nature,

The ACTING SURVEYOR-GENERAL said that with regard to this section the power given was not now as it existed under the Ordinance passed in 1889. A suggestion had been made, in which he was quite willing to concur, that notice should be given of such temporary stopping of the

roadway where practicable. The clause only gave the same power to the Surveyor-General as he could give to every private person in the Colony.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD said he did not know whether he was quite in order, but if His Excellency would permit he would read an expression of opinion from one of the architects in the Colony with regard to this clause which he had received just before he entered the Council Chamber. The letter was from Mr. Danby and was as follows:

"I have no suggestions to make, except in respect to Section No. 15 (the last), which would, if passed, give the Surveyor-General almost unlimited power; such power as no vestry or municipal surveyor has at home or elsewhere, and I speak from experience. The home surveyors have power to stop up public streets for the purpose of carrying out public works, but when a street is once stopped up, the surveyor has to see that the work is carried on with all possible speed to its completion and not do as the P. W. D. have been doing here lately, in the matter, say, of the sewer in Ice House Lane and Ice House Street, which as you know has been in hand for months past, and where there has been (at times) day after day only about half-a-dozen men at work. I have no hesitation in saying (and I say it with all respect to the P. W. D.) that had my firm or any other similar firm had that work in hand, we could easily have completed it in half the time the P. W. D. have already been over it; all the stones, for instance for the crossing of Queen's Road should have been properly dressed at the quarries, and set up there dry; they should then have been numbered and brought over here as wanted: there would have been no difficulty in doing this, we have done it in many cases, such as for sewers, bridge piers, &c., for Singapore. In neither Shanghai nor any other city in the world (except this) would large stones have been permitted to remain for months in such public thoroughfares as the Praya and Ice House Lane, turning these busy streets into a contractor's stoneyard, exclusively for his own benefit. So far as regards depositing building or other material in public streets, and lighting and fencing open trenches and holes at night, the P. W. D. should be placed in exactly the same position that you, I, or the general public are. As the law now stands, the Surveyor-General has no more power to create a public nuisance than you or I have; this is as it should be, and the law ought to remain so: the existing law does not interfere in any way with the execution of any public works in public streets or elsewhere, but should the P. W. D. create or cause a 'public' nuisance in or by the carrying out of such public work, the ratepayers or the public have a remedy; if this section No. 15 passes, they will have none, it would not be just. Fish of one and flesh of another. The Surveyor-General would



be 'immaculate,' as Mr. Wise said the other day referring to this section. The Surveyor General could, if he thought proper, stop up the whole of Queen's Road for a year or as long as he liked, and without giving a reason for so doing, and no one could prevent him; should he be summoned, he has only to go into the box and say "that in his opinion such stoppage was necessary," and the public would have no appeal or remedy from such opinion. The Surveyor-General is defendant, judge, and jury on his own case. He, like the Queen, could 'do no wrong.'"

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL asked if the hon. member moved an amendment in accordance with the last paragraph of the letter.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD said he did not. He simply put it forward for the consideration of the Government.

The ACTING SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I think there appears to be some mistake in regard to this clause. In England every surveyor to a borough or municipal board has the power to block up or close streets where work is to be done. The Ordinance proposes to give the same power to the Surveyor-General. It is the duty of every Surveyor-General to carry out the work with as much speed and despatch as is compatible with efficiency, and naturally every Surveyor-General would do so. Seeing that the Surveyor-General and his officers would do so, I think such an amendment as has been proposed or suggested is totally unnecessary.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—I may be permitted to say that although I may be mistaken I think it extremely doubtful whether any such clause as proposed by the hon. member is to be found in any Act of Parliament. What he suggests may be the practice; I think I am right in saying it is certainly not the statute law, and under the circumstances I can only oppose such an amendment as he has suggested.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I think there is some misapprehension. I did not put forward any amendment. I think the suggestion put forward in the letter a very practical one, and I therefore submitted it for the consideration of the Government.

The ACTING SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I think the suggestion is based upon something that was stated in the Police Court some weeks ago, and which I may say was totally without foundation.

The clause as amended by the Acting Surveyor-General was then agreed to, the Bill passed through Committee, and the Council resumed.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—Before moving the third reading I may say that the letter referred to at the last meeting of Council has received consideration, but I do not propose to enter into details with regard to it. The Acting Surveyor-General has given every consideration to the suggestions made by Mr. Hancock, but does not see his way to adopt them in the present bill. He has, however, made a report on these suggestions, and if Mr. Hancock would wish to see that report I have no doubt he would be allowed to have a copy or see the original at the Colonial Secretary's office.

The ACTING SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I may add that most

of the proposals made by Mr. Hancock are already provided for by various Ordinances of the Colony concerned with building.

The Bill was then read a third time and passed.

#### THE MERCHANT SHIPPING BILL.

The Council resumed consideration of this Bill in Committee.

On section 7, subsection 7, which provides a penalty for steam launches licensed under the section plying without a certificated master or engineer.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL said the Harbour Master had suggested to him that this clause should be extended by inserting the words "whether licensed or not," and he therefore proposed this amendment.

The clause as amended was passed.

On section 47, the suspending clause, which provides that the Ordinance shall come into force on a day to be proclaimed by the Governor.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL said it was proposed to amend this clause by making the date on which the Bill should come into operation the 1st January, 1892.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD objected to the amendment. There was no necessity for bringing the Bill into operation at such an early date. It was now the 7th December. That meant 24 days only before the Bill came into force. He would suggest that the date be postponed to the 1st February. He did not think the Government could put forward any special reason for bringing the law into force on the 1st January.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—I do not think it is for the Government to put forward any special reason for accepting the suggestion of the hon. member. Most bills come into operation directly they are passed. This Bill has been before the public for a year and I certainly do not see that any hardship can ensue from its coming into force on the date named. The hon. member has simply proposed that the date should be postponed. He has not shown that any hardship would happen by the Bill coming into force on the 1st January. Perhaps the hon. member will state his reasons for objecting to that date.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I was not aware that the Bill was to come into force at such an early date and I have not therefore obtained the views of those interested in shipping. I do not see that any harm can be done by making the date the 1st February.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL said he thought plenty of time had been given while the Bill remained in Committee for every one interested to put forward their ideas, and the hon. member himself had asked that the operation of Table A should be suspended for a time

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referring to the postponement of the general provisions of the bill.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I think a little more time might be allowed. Within twenty-four days the Bill will come into force. Formerly something like two or three months were allowed. It would certainly not entail any hardship on anybody if the Bill did not come into force till the 1st February.

His EXCELLENCY—I should like to ask the hon. member opposite (Hon. J. J. Keswick) if he sees any objection to the Bill coming into force on the 1st January.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK—I do not know that there is any objection, your Excellency, to the Bill coming into force on the 1st January, but possibly if a little more time were given it might be that suggestions regarding the Bill would be sent in in the interval which the Council might adopt.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—I think the Government could scarcely do that. The Bill is proposed to be read a third time to-day, and if fresh suggestions are adopted an amending Bill would be necessary. However, I am directed by his Excellency to say that he is quite willing to leave the clause in its original form, that is that the Bill will not come into force until a day to be proclaimed by the Governor.

The clause as it originally stood was then passed.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I rise to order. I would ask whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the letter from the Surveyor to the Bureau Veritas which appeared in the *China Mail* of Friday with reference to the classing of vessels under 60 tons. It seems to me very hard that vessels classed by Lloyd's and Bureau Veritas should have to be open to any other survey. I think it is a very great hardship. There are only two Government surveyors, and they appear to be overworked, the consequence being that steam launches going to be surveyed are sometimes detained for four, five, or six days I would therefore beg to move that the clause be so amended as to provide that vessels under sixty tons surveyed by Lloyd's or the Bureau Veritas surveyor shall not require any further survey.

Hon. Ho KAI seconded the proposition. He thought that if the vessels were passed by Lloyd's or the Bureau Veritas that was quite good enough.

The ACTING HARBOUR MASTER said that he opposed the amendment. He thought that no distinction should be made between classed and unclassed vessels. With regard to what had been said about vessels being delayed for four or five days, he would like the hon. member who represented the Chamber of Commerce to mention such a case.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—My information was derived from Captain Anderson.

The ACTING HARBOUR MASTER—I can only say that I know of no such cases. As far as the surveyors go, in reference to what the hon. member says about them being

overworked, I can only say that no complaint of the sort has reached me.

The amendment was not pressed to a division.

The Government accepted an amendment suggested by the Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD that light and other dues should not in future be altered, except by resolution of the Legislative Council.

The ACTING HARBOUR MASTER made a correction with regard to an expression of opinion which he had at a previous meeting attributed to the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce as to light dues not being merged into general revenue in any other part of the world. He said that on referring to the speech of the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce he had put a wrong construction on the words used and that his previous remark as to the statement of the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce was therefore incorrect.

Various verbal alterations were made, and the Bill was then read a third time and passed.

#### THE RETIREMENT OF THE ACTING GOVERNOR.

His EXCELLENCY—As this is probably the last occasion on which I shall have the honour of presiding over this Council or joining in your deliberations, I should like before we adjourn to say a few words. I wish to express my deep thanks to hon. members of this Council for the kind assistance which they have given me during the last seven months. Rather suddenly called upon to govern this important colony. I felt very greatly the responsibility attaching to my position, all the more that the work of civil Governor was so entirely new to me, and as regards this Council I had not even been a member of it and was therefore unaccustomed to its procedure. All I can say is that I have given up my whole time and thoughts to the accomplishment of the object which I set before myself at first, namely, to shrink from no work however uninviting or difficult, and so to act that neither executive nor legislative work might be hindered by the regretted absence of the Colony's proper Governor. How far I have succeeded in this I must leave to others to judge, but I feel that I can say, as was said by Mr. Fleming on a similar occasion last year, that of the numerous questions that I found unsettled or that have come before me, I have the satisfaction of knowing that none have been shelved, several, indeed most, have been settled, and few remain unsolved. I could not have done this but for the able assistance I have received from all the officers of the Government for which I beg to publicly express my acknowledgment and thanks as well as for the kind forbearance of this Council. Although I leave you now as a co-legislator I have obtained an insight and an interest into the public concerns of the colony

which will give me an interest in following your  
~~public deliberations~~ which I trust  
will continue to be for the public good, the  
retention unimpaired of this distant but  
important outwork of the empire, the welfare of  
its inhabitants, and the progress of its institutions

and enterprises. (Applause.) As it is expected  
that the new Governor, Sir William Robinson,  
may arrive about Wednesday next, I will  
adjourn the Council *sine die*.

The Council then adjourned.

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