

7TH JUNE, 1892.

PRESENT:—

His Excellency the Governor, Sir WILLIAM ROBINSON, K.C.M.G.

Hon. G. T. M. O'BRIEN, C.M.G., Colonial Secretary.

Hon. W. M. GOODMAN, Attorney-General.

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

Hon. F. H. May, Acting Colonial Treasurer.

Hon. F. A. COOPER, Director of Public Works.

Hon. R. M. RUMSEY, R.N., Harbour Master.

Hon. C. P. CHATER.

Hon. Ho Kai.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS.

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

MINUTES.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

HON. E. R. BELLIOS.

HIS EXCELLENCY—The Hon. E. R. Bellios has been confirmed in his appointment as a member of the Legislative Council, and will now take the oath.

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS accordingly took the oath.

FINANCIAL MINUTES.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to bring before the Council the following financial minutes. In the first the Governor recommends a vote of \$1,500, being supplementary provision to defray incidental expenses in the Police Department. In the next the Governor recommends the Council to vote \$3,868, expenses in connection with an improved system of signalling. The third vote recommended is for \$587, that sum being the difference between the amount voted in the estimates for this year and the actual sum due to the Telegraph Company for the cost of telegraph cable, aerial line and Morse instruments connecting the Gap Rock with the Harbour Office at Hongkong. In the fourth minute the Governor recommends the Council to vote \$1,200 to defray the cost of clothing for the gaol staff and prisoners, not provided for in the estimates for the current year, and in the last the Governor recommends the vote of \$5,000 as

supplementary provision for the cost of passages, and bonuses in lieu of passages, in the Police Department. I beg to move that these minutes be referred to the Finance Committee.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL seconded.

Carried.

PAPERS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I beg to lay upon the table the report of the Superintendent of the Afforestation Department for 1891.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.

The DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS—I beg to move that the report of the proceedings of the Public Works Committee at a meeting held on the 23rd of May, 1892, be adopted.

The report was as follows:—"The Committee having considered the plans and estimates for the proposed construction and improvement of Roads at Tsim-tsa-tsui, Kowloon, recommended that the work be proceeded with."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Carried.

AN OBSERVATORY AT THE PEAK.

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS—Sir, in accordance with notice given I have to put a question to the Government. In looking over the report of the Director of the Observatory for 1891, which was laid on the table at the last meeting of the Council, I came across a paragraph which read as follows:—"The branch observatory at the Peak suggested by General Palmer is 1881 and declared necessary for storm warnings by the Observatory Commission in 1890, and upon which improvement in storm warnings mainly depends, has not yet been constructed." After reading this paragraph, Sir, it occurred to me to ask the following question at this meeting:—"Will the Government be good enough to state whether the subject of the establishment of a branch observatory at the Peak has been under consideration, and if so, for what reason the work has been deferred or abandoned?" It will

be remembered, Sir, that the principal reason for having this Observatory established in our midst—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I rise, Sir, to submit that the hon. member is out of order.

HIS EXCELLENCY—You must confine yourself to the question as much as possible.

Hon. E. R. BELILIOS—I am not introducing anything extraneous. The principal reason in having this Observatory established in our midst was to foretell and to forecast the approach of typhoons. After a trial of a few years it was found that the Observatory failed in its functions in this respect—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I again rise to submit that the hon member is out of order. His statement is entirely a matter of opinion. The Observatory may have failed or it may not have failed.

HIS EXCELLENCY (to Hon. E. R. Belilios)—I don't think you can go into that matter.

Hon. E. R. BELILIOS—Then I cannot proceed any further.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I must confine myself, according to the rules and orders of this Council, to simply answering the question which has been put, and in answer thereto I have to state that the question of the establishment of a branch observatory at the Peak has several times been under consideration, and that the Government has no intention of establishing such a branch observatory at the present, nor, if at all, until other public works of more pressing importance have been completed.

THE PRAYA RECLAMATION.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL—I have the honour to move the second reading of a Bill entitled "An Ordinance to provide means for ascertaining the amounts to be paid by way of compensation in respect of the Wharves and Piers along the line of the Praya Reclamation, to fix the periods for the payment thereof and for other purposes in connection therewith." I should like, however, in formally moving the second reading, to make a short statement before doing so, as it is possible that it would be better if the further consideration of the Bill was postponed. It will be in the recollection of hon. members that this Bill was put down for the second reading last Monday fortnight. It was then said that if there was any serious opposition it would be too late to carry it this session because it would have been necessary to read the Bill a second and third time even to get through last Monday fortnight, which was supposed to be at the time the last day of the session. It was then suggested that it would be a pity to hurry the matter and His Excellency, in order that there should be no ground for a storge of hasty legislation, at some inconvenience,

arranged that the Council should meet again that day fortnight. Yesterday being a public holiday the Council was postponed until to-day. I anticipated receiving at an early date after the adjournment of last Monday fortnight any objections or any suggestions which might have been made for the improvement of the Bill. I received no suggestions or communications of any kind, however, until last Saturday. Then I had two interviews with the learned gentleman who advises several of the wharf owners with regard to this matter. I had the opportunity also of consulting with Mr. Chater, who has taken a great interest in the Praya Reclamation. I cannot say that the alternative Bill which was brought to me by the learned gentleman, who represents several of the wharf owners, entirely commended itself to my mind. There appeared to me to be objections to it, and as Monday was a holiday it was impossible for me to get all the papers and go into the matter as fully as I should wish to have done. I should like to state further, in the first place, what efforts the Government has made to settle this matter at an early date. The first step taken by the Government was as long ago as last September. When I was at that time acting as Colonial Secretary this Government intimation was issued. It will be found in the Government *Gazette* No. 391 and reads as follows:—"Wharf owners and occupiers claiming to be entitled to compensation in respect of their wharves and piers under Section 7 of Ordinance 16 of 1889 are hereby requested to appoint a representative to confer with the Surveyor-General on the subject of the principle of apportioning the sum specified as not exceeding \$180,000 apportioned for that purpose by the above Ordinance." I must say that I was sorry that the only effect of that circular was to receive intimations from some wharf owners that they could not appoint anybody to represent them, that there were various interests which prevented them from doing so, and that consequently no one would appear on behalf of the wharf owners to consult with the Director of Public Works, and arrive between them at a fair and equitable mode of apportioning this sum of money. That ending in failure the next effort the Government made was in introducing this particular Bill which has been before the Council. It appeared to me that the scheme suggested in it was a fair and simple scheme. The objects the Government had in view in introducing it were first to facilitate the payment of this sum of money which was appropriated for the purpose, and secondly to obviate all unnecessary litigation and contention. The Bill appeared to me to be a fair one. The scheme was that the Director of Public Works should make a schedule. Having done his best to apportion fairly this sum between the various lot owners, if any particular person was dissatisfied with the schedule so published—that is dissatisfied with the amount awarded to him—then that person could have the opportunity of appealing to the Supreme Court to have any complaint he  
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make heard, and a certain sum awarded to him. At the interview which I had on Saturday it was pointed out to me that that was not approved of by many of the wharf owners. It was suggested in the Bill submitted to me that there should be the right of appeal expressly given to owners, and occupiers also, not only against the sum awarded them by the Director of Public Works, but against the amount which every other person had allowed to him. This simply opens the floodgates of litigation. Assume for one moment that twelve of the wharf owners were perfectly satisfied with the amount the Director of Public Works had awarded them. No. 13 might be a man who was rather fond of litigation and rather preferred his own interests to those of the general community. He might force these other twelve persons against their will into litigation. If he says they have too much awarded to them, and that therefore there is somewhat less of the proportionate amount awarded to him, they naturally have to defend their claims—perhaps I should hardly say claims, but at any rate to defend the amount awarded them by the Director of Public Works. They would become respondents to the appeal and we should have, owing to No. 13 not being satisfied, twelve respondents in twelve cases. That might, perhaps it would, be an interesting spectacle to some people, but I think a good many would not like it. And it seems to me that the second object the Government had in trying to avoid unnecessary litigation would certainly not be advanced by such a course as that. I have considered as well as I could the alternative Bill which was sent to me on Saturday, and I would like to point out to you shortly the kind of scheme that Bill was. There was to be no attempt in the first place to equitably decide the claims by the Director of Public Works—no chance of allowing people to be perfectly satisfied with what he apportioned. The first step in the new Bill was that within a month of its passing the people were to send in their claims. The second step was that all these claims were to be brought before the Registrar of the Court. There was to be a sort of preliminary litigation before him and therefore the whole of these claims would have to be adjudicated upon by the Registrar, in the first place. He was to perform this task within four months unless he specially gave himself a longer time. At the end of that period three months would be given, after the publication of the schedule, during which any owner or occupier of a wharf dissatisfied with the decision of the Registrar could appeal, not only against an insufficient award in his own case but against an excessive award in regard to some other claim. Therefore when these unfortunate men had run the gauntlet of litigation before the Registrar they would be embarked, *nolens volens*, in further litigation before the Supreme Court. In case that should not be sufficient there was a provision inserted that the Supreme Court could be applied to within 10 days to rehear the whole proceedings or hear

counsel on some point of law connected with it. I can scarcely conceive an Ordinance better calculated to increase litigation than the Ordinance suggested as an alternative Ordinance to that brought before the Council. The question remains what is to be done under these circumstances. The Government brought forward this measure in good faith with the desire to settle this matter as soon as might be, and assist the wharf owners in arriving at the amount they should receive and to shorten the period of time which must necessarily elapse before they receive anything. The alternative measure, which as far as I am concerned I could not recommend, was only proposed on Saturday. I cannot say that I have had the time or opportunity in that interval to remodel the Bill so as to embrace the better parts of both these Ordinances. Under these circumstances, therefore, it seems to me that the best course to adopt would be to ask his Excellency's permission to adjourn this Bill until next session and in the meantime I hope the time and opportunity afforded will lead to some solution which will be satisfactory to all parties.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I rise to second the proposition of the hon. and learned Attorney-General. I regret very much that this matter has not been arranged ere this. I was certainly under the impression that between the last meeting and this meeting there would have been ample time to arrive at a definite conclusion, but I regret to say that the learned Q.C., who represents at least half a dozen of the wharf owners, has had a very busy fortnight—he has been engaged for several days in a very important case at the Supreme Court—and he was only ready with his amendments, or alterations, or new Ordinance, whatever you like to call them, on Saturday morning. I tried very hard to see if some arrangement could be arrived at on Saturday. I devoted two hours to the hon. and learned Attorney-General to see if matters could be brought to a head, but I regret to say that the difference between the learned Q.C. and the hon. and learned Attorney-General was so great that no definite arrangement could be arrived at. Under these circumstances I think that the best course to be pursued is the one now proposed by the hon. and learned Attorney-General, namely, to postpone until the next session the discussion on the Bill, and I hope by that time—I am sanguine that by that time—some arrangement will be made which perhaps will obviate the necessity for an Ordinance at all.

HIS EXCELLENCY—I will agree to that.

The Bill was therefore left over until next session.

## THE END OF THE SESSION.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Gentlemen, I am glad to be able to release you for a time from further attendance in Council without any prejudice to existing interests. The session, if I may so call it—and I am fully impressed with the necessity for a regular session—has been unusually short, but it has not been a barren one. The few Ordinances passed will, I have no doubt, prove useful, and the amending Ordinances, or at least one of them at all events, will have the effect of allaying a certain amount of irritation which the original bills gave rise to. I have to thank the unofficial members for their assistance in the work of the session. As practical men of business I set a very high value upon their services. With them I am fully alive to the necessity for the economical administration of the finances of the Colony. If I did not consent to the proposed Commission of Enquiry it was not because I did not appreciate the weight of their arguments, but because the matter is one peculiarly within the province of the Governor, and because I am not prepared to admit that after a short experience of six months I am incompetent to deal with it. When the time and opportunity arrive honourable members will find me in a position to act and ready to do so (applause). I propose now that the vacation shall last till late in the autumn, but if any necessity should arise for the reassembling of this Council for the transaction of business before then, I will call you together for the despatch of that business. Thanking you for your attendance during the past four months I have the honour to adjourn this Council *sine die*.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I have to thank your Excellency for the kind remarks which you have been pleased to make with regard to the unofficial members, remarks which I am sure are as much appreciated by my hon. friends as they are by myself. As to your Excellency's remarks with regard to the proposed Retrenchment Commission, when I seconded the proposition made by the hon. member who represents the Chamber of Commerce. I had no idea of suggesting that your Excellency was not perfectly able to cope with the question yourself, but my sole aim was, as I said at the time, to strengthen your hands and by means of the Commission to indicate to your Excellency exactly where retrenchment was most needed. That your Excellency has done and is doing all you possibly can to the much desired end of economy, we all know very well, and we hope shortly to see the good results of your Excellency's efforts in that direction. Speaking generally of my unofficial colleagues, I think it is not necessary for me to assure your Excellency that whatever position we take up, our actions are always prompted by a sincere and earnest desire for the good of the colony, and that this has been and will always be our sole aim and object. We have had a rather troublous session—or if I may qualify it, the earlier part of the session was somewhat troublesome. We have passed a good many Ordinances, but some of them have not turned out as satisfactorily as was expected, and the consequence has been that we have recently had to pass

amending Ordinances—I fear that we shall have to pass a few more of them next session—but the worst of it all has been that some of these very Ordinances which we have had to amend were passed by the Government official majority over the heads of the unofficial members. This has certainly been rather unpleasant to us, and I fear has caused some little friction, but I sincerely trust when we meet here next all difficulties will have been smoothed over, and that we shall one and all of us work harmoniously together to attain that end which I feel sure is at the heart of every one of us, the well-being of Hongkong.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Sir, I fully concur in every word which has been so well spoken by the honourable the senior unofficial member. We regret your Excellency did not grant the Retrenchment Commission asked for last month as we feel that the Committee's report would have helped to strengthen your hands. With out any hurt to its dignity the Colonial Government could have well afforded to be less arbitrary than it was in the early part of this session, when Ordinances were enacted in opposition to the unofficial vote and against the wishes of the community. You have had unnecessary trouble in amending some of these Ordinances and I fear, sir, further amendments are still required. An official majority invariably tends to arbitrary rule, undue resistance, and occasional protests from the unofficial minority. The hurried legislation in question undoubtedly caused friction, but we rejoice to find that during the short period your Excellency has been here we have had repeated proofs of your desire to meet the wishes of the public. The colonis's therefore with every reason look forward to good results from your rule, but if I may be allowed to offer a suggestion I think a majority of the unofficial members would be a further advantage to the Colony. I therefore venture to sincerely hope that before your Governorship has expired your Excellency will have s??nred for Hongkong what our late lamented friend and former Governor, Sir John Pope Hennessy, obtained for Mauritius, viz., a majority of unofficial members in the Legislative Council. Mauritius is not the only British Crown Colony so favoured. The other day British Honduras received a majority of unofficial members in its legislative assembly. If Mauritius and British Honduras are so trusted, surely this loyal and progressive Colony is fairly entitled to similar consideration. Should your Excellency not be disposed to concede a majority, let the number of the official and unofficial members be equal, and all the unofficial  
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the popular voice and not as at present mostly by Government nomination.

Hon. HO KAI—Including the Chinese representative?

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Including the Chinese representative. (Laughter).

His EXCELLENCY—I do not think that I need enter into any of the debateable matter raised, but I will merely thank the unofficial members for the confidence which they appear to repose in me, and I assure them that their confidence will not be misplaced.

The Council then rose.

#### FINANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held at the conclusion of the orders of the day. The Colonial Secretary occupied the chair.

The CHAIRMAN—The first matter that I have to bring before the Finance Committee is the following recommendation of the Governor:—"The Governor recommends the Council to vote a sum of fifteen hundred dollars, being supplementary provision to defray incidental expenses in the Police Department." It is mentioned in the minute that the Department has now to pay for its water and disinfectants which were formerly supplied gratis, and the extra expenditure was not foreseen in framing the estimates for the current year. It will be thus seen that the vote is purely a matter of account. The Government receives on one side and pays away on the other I presume there will be no objection to it.

Vote passed.

The CHAIRMAN—The next is:—"The Governor recommends the Council to vote a sum of five hundred and eighty-seven dollars and thirty-three cents, being the difference between the amount voided in the estimates for this year and the actual sum due to the Telegraph Company, for the cost of telegraph cable, aerial line and Morse instruments connecting the Gap Rock with the Harbour Office at Hongkong. Amount due, \$87,253.33; estimated for, \$86,666.00; balance, \$587.33. It appears that since the amount was estimated there has been a fall in exchange, which necessitates the provision of a slightly larger sum than anticipated. I may mention that the additional sum to be provided would be in excess of that which the Finance Committee is asked to pass if it were not for the fact that there was a certain surplus of cable which the Telegraph Company took back, thereby reducing the additional amount which we are now asked to vote.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—As it is evident that this loss in exchange has been caused by not fixing the exchange when this money was voted, I think that when sterling amounts are voted by the Council in future, it would be better to secure the exchange at the time of the vote, which can be done at almost any exchange bank in Hongkong.

The CHAIRMAN—You suggest that the Government should make a time bargain?

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Not exactly.

The CHAIRMAN—The Government might get the worst of it—or they might not of course.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—It would at any rate be much better to ensure against loss. Exchange has not been fixed up to the present, and up to the present it has been all loss.

Hon. HO KAI—It might have been all gain.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—It does not do for the Government to speculate.

The CHAIRMAN—Exchange has latterly gone up a little. If the Government had asked a month ago for a rate for to-day it would have got a somewhat worse rate probably than it could get to-day.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—The Government would not have lost by it, and it would have been a safeguard or insurance against any fall in exchange.

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS—May I ask if this money was paid all at once?

The CHAIRMAN—Yes, on the completion of the work. The Director of Public Works has had the actual dealing with the transaction. My impression is that the amount was paid on the completion of the work about a month ago.

The DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS—The agreement with the Telegraph Company was that the money was to be paid when the cable was laid.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Were tenders invited for the amount of exchange required?

The CHAIRMAN—The Treasurer was instructed to make the best terms he could.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—If tenders had been invited better terms might have been made. The Treasury chest here invite tenders for their bills—

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—I do not think any bank was consulted except the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank.

The CHAIRMAN—The Hongkong Bank have not the monopoly of our business?

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—No.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—It very often happens that one bank is selling at a better rate than another bank.

The CHAIRMAN—Yes.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—As we are dealing with public money it is only right that we should secure the best terms.

The CHAIRMAN—Was the amount paid to the Telegraph Company in dollars or by a sterling bill?

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—In dollars.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—With regard to the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank it was not a monopoly at all because no bill was purchased. The bank only quoted a rate and got no benefit at all.

The CHAIRMAN—Possibly we might have got better terms from some other bank.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I take it that a sterling bill was bought for the remittance required.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—No, that was not done. The agent was paid here.

The CHAIRMAN—I think your suggestion for calling for tenders in such cases a very good one, Mr. Whitehead, which might be acted upon.

Vote passed.

The CHAIRMAN—The next minute is as follow:—"The Governor recommends the Council to vote a sum of twelve hundred dollars, to defray the cost of clothing for the Gaol staff and prisoners not provided for in the estimates for the current year." It appears that a certain class of clothing is obtained every two years or so, sometimes at longer, sometimes at shorter intervals, but generally every second year. When the estimates were being framed for 1892 this requirement was overlooked, and as the clothes are needed, or will be, it will be necessary to vote the cost. I have ascertained that the expenditure is not unusual in the present year, that is to say it is not in excess of the expenditure in previous years where the clothing has been included in those years, and as it is simply the cost of an item which was not foreseen in the estimates I suppose there will be no objection.

Vote passed.

The CHAIRMAN—The next item, although somewhat large, is a mere matter of account. "The Governor recommends the Council to vote a sum of five thousand dollars as supplementary provision for the cost of passages and bonuses in lieu of passage, in the Police Department." Previous to this year bonuses were paid by the Treasury out of the vote for Pensions, Retired Allowances and Gratuities. In this year's estimates the item "bonuses" was transferred from the Treasury to the Police Department and coupled with "passages," but no corresponding increase made to the Police vote. The vote now asked for is merely in effect a matter of account, as the Treasury vote will be relieved by the amount added to the Police vote.

Vote passed.

The CHAIRMAN—The last matter before the Committee is the following minute:—"The Governor recommends the Council to vote a sum of three thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight dollars (\$3,868), for the expenditure required for an improved system of signalling the approach of vessels to the port as follows:—Completing direct telegraphic communication between Post Office and Gap Rock, \$150; completing direct telegraphic communication between Post Office and Kowloon, \$700; providing

quarters at the Gap Rock, \$2,000; providing quarters at Cape D'Aguiar, \$700; three clerks (for 3 months), \$270; two signalmen (for 3 months), \$48; total, \$3,868." There has been some correspondence in the new papers about this subject and I think I may take it for granted that the Committee generally is aware of the advantages which it is presumed will be derived from the alteration in the signalling system which has been suggested, and also is aware of the steps which have been taken to bring the matter to a point. I am sorry that owing to the shortness of time, and my having had to consult many people about this matter, I am not in a position to clearly state in the financial minute which I submitted to the Governor the exact expenditure that will be required for the details of this service, supposing it be sanctioned by the Finance Committee; but I think I can place the Committee in a position to decide. It may be well that I should mention with regard to the matter generally that the Governor is not at all anxious to press any expenditure on the Council, but on the other hand he will be willing to sanction any moderate expenditure that may be recommended by the unofficial members. The responsibility in fact for incurring such an expenditure practically rests with them. I may mention that I received an estimate for a very much larger expenditure than is included in the minute for the cost of the works to be constructed. It amounted to nearly \$10,000, but after consulting one of the leading gentlemen interested in the question, by His Excellency's desire, I was informed that the parties interested would be satisfied with a very much smaller expenditure. The expense originally proposed included provision for establishing direct communication between Cape D'Aguiar and the Post Office. I am informed by a fairly good authority that there is a good prospect of Waglan lighthouse being completed early next year. That no doubt has weighed with the gentlemen concerned, and at an interview I had with some of them, they thought it would not be right to incur the heavy expense of establishing direct communication which would not be needed when the D'Aguiar light was superseded by that at Waglan. In the meantime they will be content to take their chance of the existing communication. There is at present a line between Cape D'Aguiar and Shaukiwan and between Shaukiwan and the Central Police Station. It was represented that this line was very much out of order and the Director of Public Works made an inspection of it between Cape D'Aguiar and Shaukiwan. He is of opinion that for a time it will answer the purpose, and as I said before the parties interested are content to take their chance of that communication whatever it may happen to be. If it is not satisfactory they still do not think it right to incur a very large expense to establish direct communication. I think I may now come to the items which make up the total of \$3,868. The first is a small item of \$150 for completing the telegraphic communication b e t w e e n t h e P o s t

Office and Gap Rock. The second amount is for \$700 to complete direct telegraphic communication between the Post Office and Kowloon. After a message has reached the Post Office it has to be conveyed to the new signal station at Kowloon. It is proposed to use the signal mast which is at present used for hoisting typhoon signals. As the messages have to be sent to Kowloon either the Post Office has to be directly connected with Kowloon through a wire or some arrangements must be made with the Telegraph Company for transmitting messages at an annual charge. I have written asking them what they would undertake that for, but I have not received any answer, but it cannot exceed \$700. I believe they are in communication with their directors at home. The third item is \$2,000 for providing quarters at Gap Rock. I may say that a number of the gentlemen who were interested at first took exception to the engaging of additional telegraph clerks and therefore to providing additional accommodation. The Harbour Master pointed out, however, that although the time occupied in sending messages was of course very small, still keeping the lighthouse keepers in a constant state of expectation and watching might have results prejudicial to their proper duties. I have since heard from one of the representatives of the firms concerned, who has seen a good many others, that those concerned are now quite satisfied that the addition of clerks is required. Of such a large sum as \$2,000 for quarters at the Gap Rock the unofficial members may wish to have some explanation. I am informed by the Director of Public Works that all the materials will have to be transported to Gap Rock and that four or five trips of the *Fame* will be required for the purpose. He tells me he cannot construct the accommodation for less than \$2,000. The next item is \$700 for providing quarters at Cape D'Aguiar. The next, \$270, is for three months' salary of 3 clerks. It has been ascertained that we can get clerks at \$30 per month. Two signalmen will be required to hoist the signals and their pay for three months will amount to \$48, which is not a very large amount.

The HARBOUR MASTER—The typhoon signals are at present hoisted by the Sergeant in charge at Tsim-tsa-tsui and a *lukong* actually does the work. It takes more than one man to do the work. From the report of the Director of the Observatory it is stated that the typhoon signal was hoisted 24 times last year.

The CHAIRMAN—There is some expenditure, I believe,

which I have not been able to include in the minute. Some flags will have to be bought.

The HARBOUR MASTER—\$171 altogether will be required for flags (the hon. member explained the system of flags used at the present station).

The CHAIRMAN—I should like the unofficial members to express an opinion on this vote.

Hon. F. R. BELLIOS—I am in favour of it.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD said—I am certainly in favour of it. An expenditure of \$70,000 odd has been incurred in laying the cable to the Gap Rock, and unless that cable is to be used the sum expended will be practically lost or the cable rendered more or less useless. It was on the strong representation of the Chamber of Commerce that the Government agreed to lay this cable; and furthermore it was agreed that this expenditure on the cable would be taken out of the increased light dues which are now charged on shipping and that these increased light dues would be continued till this money was reimbursed to the Government. I think I am well within the mark when I say the shipping community of the port are desirous of having this information regarding the arrival of ships at Gap Rock telegraphed here. It means in many instances a very great saving, as delays in this harbour would be avoided. Agents are enabled to get everything ready for a steamer's reception, and she gets a speedier despatch in consequence.

Hon. HO KAI—I am entirely in favour of it.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I am in favour of it. I have already expressed myself strongly in favour of the system. I am sure that it will be not only a boon to the shipping community but to the whole colony. It will do a great amount of good at a very small cost.

Vote passed.

The CHAIRMAN suggested and the members agreed that, as this was the last meeting of the session the money voted on this and the other financial minutes agreed to by the Committee should be forthwith expended as though passed by Council.