

28TH MAY, 1900.

PRESENT:—

His EXCELLENCY the Acting Governor, Major-General GASCOIGNE, C.M.G. (Commanding the Troops).

The Hon. F. H. MAY, C.M.G. (Acting Colonial Secretary).

Hon. W. MEIGH GOODMAN (Attorney-General).

Hon. A. M. THOMSON (Colonial Treasurer).

Hon. R. D. ORMSBY (Director of Public Works).

Hon. C. P. CHATER, C.M.G.

Hon. Dr. HO KAI.

Hon. H. C. NICOLLE,

Hon. A. W. BREWIN.

Hon. WEI A YUK.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK.

Mr. R. F. JOHNSTON (Acting Clerk of Councils).

PAPERS.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the reports of the Medical Officer of Health, the Sanitary Surveyor, the Colonial Veterinary Surgeon and the Registrar General for the year 1899; the Secretary of State's despatch with reference to the Governor's salary; and the final statement in respect of the loan of £200,000 raised under Ordinance No. 2 of 1893.

FINANCIAL

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the report of the Finance Committee (No. 8) and moved its adoption.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded and the motion was carried.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table Financial Minute No. 26, and proposed that it be referred to the Finance Committee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded and the motion was carried.

SEARCHING FOR PLAGUE CASES.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY proposed:—"That the amendment to Bye-law 25 of the 'Bye-laws made under section 13 of Ordinance 15 of 1894,' made by the Sanitary Board on the 17th day of May, 1900, be approved by this Council."

The DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS seconded.

The amended Bye-law empowers the search parties to commence their visitations at five o'clock in the morning instead of eight, and to continue them until 6 p.m., as heretofore.

The Hon. Dr. HO KAI—I beg to move as an amendment that this amended Bye-law be not approved, and that it be referred back to the Sanitary Board for further consideration. The Bye-law provided among other things that any officer of the Sanitary Board may visit any house between the hours of 5 a.m. and 6 p.m., and if he finds any person sick he can order his removal to the Hospital for examination by a properly qualified medical man, or he can detain the person in the house and get a medical man to examine him there. The old Bye-law confining the houses to between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. was severe enough. A visit from a search party composed of persons who were not properly qualified medical men, and the fact that they have to examine a patient to a certain extent to find out whether there is anything the matter with him or not, are enough to alarm anyone—not merely women and children, but even grownup men. It is a source of great terror to a person to run the chance by being removed from the house to the hospital whether suffering from disease or not. It is quite possible for a person so terrified to develop in the course of a few days signs of the very disease from which he is suspected to suffer. There has been such a case in the West Indies. Two convicts who were perfectly healthy were told they were suspected of having yellow fever. They were accordingly removed to a perfectly clean hut and there confined. Three days afterwards they developed symptoms of yellow fever and died, and when the *post mortem* examination was made they were found to be suffering from yellow fever, and yet at the time there was no yellow fever in the locality. I do not know whether it has been proved, but it is the general impression that a great number of people have been frightened into plague through the visits of these search parties. When the visits are paid between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. a medical officer can easily be procured to examine any suspected case, because most people are up by 8 a.m. and there is someone who understands English and who can explain matters. Thus if any wrong is committed it can easily be set right, but it will be different under the amended Byelaw. I venture to say that at five o'clock in morning 999 out of 1,000 people will be in bed, and not only the male population but the women and children. Imagine to yourselves the feelings of a man aroused in the early morning from a sound sleep by being summoned to open the door to admit a search party, who want to look into every nook and corner in the place and very likely examine the children, women and men, to see whether they had the fever or not. It is not merely a case of a search party going into a place to see whether it is clean or not, but to see whether any person is suffering from plague or any other disease, and this will cause the Chinese population of Hongkong such inconvenience and alarm that they would be far better away from here in a much hotter place than Hongkong. It

seems to me that the plague would not make half as much mischief as the search parties under this amended Bye-law. On behalf of the Chinese community I cannot offer too strong an opposition to the amended Bye-law. So far as I can gather from the newspaper report of the Sanitary Board, the reason for the amendment is that there are a certain number of dead bodies thrown into the streets. Some years ago, when General Black was Acting Governor, the same thing occurred, some 10 or 12 bodies being found in the streets daily. At that time a drastic measure was proposed by the Sanitary Board, namely to have all the bodies found in the street cremated. This naturally caused a great commotion among the Chinese, and I and my colleague, the Hon. Wei A Yuk, were deputed by them to interview General Black. The remedy we proposed was that the Tung Wah Hospital should open a branch hospital at Kennedytown and that the Chinese should be allowed to treat their own plague cases according to their own methods, having found out from them that their great objection to reporting plague cases was that they were not allowed to have their own medical treatment, and that they were removed to a European hospital, where they were subjected to treatment of which they did not approve. When that branch hospital was opened by the kind permission of General Black, the number of dead bodies found in the street diminished, being reduced from 10 or 12 a day to one or two. This year a branch hospital has on our representation been opened in connection with Tung Wah Hospital, and circulars have been distributed among the power classes of Chinese telling them that they need not be afraid to report their cases, and that the Sanitary Board had relaxed a certain regulation to induce people to report cases of plague. For example, when a case of plague occurred in a house it was usual to disinfect the whole house and not merely the floor where the case occurred, but now if a case is reported only the floor occupied by the patient is disinfected. Previously the occupants of the other floors would subscribe to pay the expense of smuggling a body away, to avoid the inconvenience of having their rooms disinfected, but by the relaxing of this regulation it is to the interest of the occupants of the floors where there is no plague to compel the occupant of the floor where there is a case to report it. It is not the respectable classes among the Chinese who are to blame. When they report a case they can under certain conditions remove the patient from the colony, and it is the same with their dead, but the poorer classes cannot do this; hence their neglect to report cases. I can understand that to a certain extent in a case like this the innocent must suffer with the guilty. But at the same time there is a maximum of suffering, and the fact that search parties would be going round at five o'clock in the morning would be so objectionable to the respectable classes among the Chinese that many of them would remove from the city.

The Hon. WEI A YUK seconded the amendment.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I am sure we all sympathise with the honourable gentleman on my left in his expressions on behalf of the respectable Chinese. The plague, however, visits the homes of the poorer Chinese principally. At the present time search parties are searching in the Wanchai district, and the plague there is confined to the working classes. These people rise at dawn, and immediately leave their homes to go and earn their bread, and it is with the object of catching them before they go to work that the amended Bye-law has been brought forward. It has been found that a man suffering from plague will go out and follow his avocation, thereby infecting his neighbours, and it may be that at sundown he is dead. I may say that in the year 1898 I was engaged in plague work myself from six to eight in the mornings, and I never noticed that anyone was put to the slightest inconvenience. It would be a great pity to refer the Bye-law back, seeing that it has already been referred back once, and I would suggest to the representatives of the Chinese that if the officers of the Sanitary Board are instructed not to carry out the Bye-law in respect of the dwellings of the respectable Chinese this will get over the difficulty. I think the line may be drawn at floors occupied by two or more families.

On this understanding the amendment was withdrawn.

The DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS said that both the Medical Officer and himself as President of the Sanitary Board would issue orders whereby the Bye-law as amended would harrass the respectable Chinese as little as possible.

The motion was then put and carried.

AMENDING THE STANDING ORDERS.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice that at the next meeting of the Council he would move a resolution amending the Standing Orders of the Council.

NATURALISATION.

The Bill entitled an Ordinance for the naturalization of Leung Shek Chin, alias Leung Foon Man, alias Leung Kin was read a second time. It subsequently passed through the committee stage, and was read a third time and passed.

THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS ORDINANCE.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL proposed the second reading of the Bill entitled an Ordinance to further amend the Protection of Women and Girls Ordinance, 1897, and to repeal two sections of the Protection of Women and Girls Amendment Ordinance, 1899. He observed that this Bill in reality made a very slight alteration

indeed in the law such alteration being contained in subsection 3 of section 2, which ran as follows.—"In any proceedings under this section proof that any woman in such brothel is or was suffering from venereal disease shall be deemed sufficient evidence until the contrary is proved that she was or is in such brothel for the purpose of prostitution." The other alteration is in section 3. The following were the objects and reasons of the Bill:—"The object of this Ordinance is to make certain amendments in the Ordinances relating to the Protection of Women and Girls directed to be made by the Secretary of State. It seemed to me that the amendments of sections 3 and 9 of Ordinance No. 31 of 1899, so directed to be made, could be effected most conveniently and simply by repealing those sections altogether, and substituting directly, in Ordinance No. 31 of 1897, amended sections containing the amendments desired; for sections 3 and 9 of Ordinance No. 31 of 1899 were, themselves, merely sections amending the Protection of Women and Girls Ordinance, 1897, and the amendment of amending sections sometimes tends to confusion. The only actual alterations in the law effected by this Ordinance are the addition of subsection (3) of section 2 to the previous two sub-sections, and the insertion of the words "generally *or specially* authorized" instead of the words "generally authorized," in the substituted section 30, set out in section 3. All the rest of this Ordinance is simply a re-enactment of existing law."

The Bill passed through the committee stage and was then read a third time and passed.

THE PENSIONS ORDINANCE.

The Council went in Committee on the bill entitled an Ordinance to consolidate and amend the law providing for the grant of pensions to the widows and orphans of deceased public officers.

The Bill passed through the Committee stage and was then read a third time and passed.

The Council then adjourned until Monday week.

MEETING OF THE FINANCE
COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was then held, the Acting Colonial Secretary presiding, and the following vote was agreed to:—

The following sums for expenses, during the seven months, 1st June to 31st December, 1900, connected with a Land Court under The Land Court (New Territories) Ordinance, 1900:—

Salaries-----	\$10,500.00
Travelling Allowances-----	1,000.00
Incidental Expenses-----	2,300.00
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	\$13,800.00

This was all the business.