

25TH MAY, 1905.

PRESENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, SIR MATTHEW NATHAN,
K C M.G.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL VILLIERS HATTON C.B.
(Commanding the Troops).

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

Hon. Sir H. S. BERKELEY Kt., (Attorney-General).

Hon. Mr. L. A. M. JOHNSTON (Colonial Treasurer).

Hon. Mr. A. W. BREWIN (Registrar-General).

Hon. Captain L. A. W. BARNES-LAWRENCE, R.N.
(Harbour Master).

Hon. Mr. W. CHATHAM (Director of Public Works).

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

Hon. Dr. HO KAI, C.M.G.

Hon. Mr. WEI A YUK.

Hon. Mr. R. SHEWAN.

Hon. Mr. GERSHOM STEWART.

Hon. Mr. C. W. DICKSON.

Mr. A. G. M. FLETCHER (Clerk of Councils).

GOVERNORS ADDRESS.

HIS EXCELLENCY said:—Gentlemen. It has become necessary to open a short session of the Council to deal with certain financial business and to add to the statute Book four Ordinances.

The most important financial matter is a vote for the equivalent in dollars of £18,933, due to the Imperial Post Office as arrears of mail subsidy to the P. and O. S. N. Co. for the seven years ending the 31st January, 1905. These arrears have been the subject of correspondence, that has gone on for the last $8\frac{1}{2}$ years. Of this correspondence all the important documents are printed as Appendices to Financial Minute No. 13, which I have drawn up to summarise it. You will see that this Government consented to the questions in dispute being put before an independent arbitrator and that its case, together with the cases of the other Eastern Colonies, were carefully presented to him by the colonial Office after consultation with the Colonies. In these circumstances the Colony should accept the award, which results, when certain accounts are brought up to the 31st of January last, in an additional payment at the rate of £2,240 per annum for the last seven years.

The subsidy to the P. and O. S. N. Co. has been raised by £10,000 for the 3 years of the extended contract which terminates on the 31st, January, 1908. The contribution of Hongkong to the subsidy thus raised will be £12,529 per annum against £12,170 the amount that will have been paid after the settlement and against £6,500 paid pending the settlement for the preceding seven

years. I would point out to you that from the apparent additions of £5,670 for the last seven years and £6,029 for the next three years have to be deducted amounts of between £3,000 and £4,000 that have hitherto been paid for sea postage, in addition to the provisional subsidy. Financial Minute No. 5 provides for the increase for 1st February to the end of the year.

You will observe from Financial Minute No. 11 that provision is made for lighting the Peak as promised to the Council at their last meeting. It is proposed to meet the expenditure incurred in maintaining the lights by an addition to the rates.

The necessity for the expenditure represented in the remaining finance minutes will be explained to you in Finance Committee.

Of the four bills which appear in the Order of the Day for first reading, the first is the most important. It has been drafted with a view to enabling land owners in the New Territories to be registered and lands to be conveyed, mortgaged and released from mortgage by simpler processes than are possible under the existing law of the Colony. It also enables the Land Officer to decide questions relating to land in a summary way. The necessity for these provisions will be realised when it is remembered that, in the small cultivated area in the New Territories, hardly more than 40,000 acres in extent, there are over 350,000 separate lots held under the Crown Lease which I have recently issued to confer appropriate titles on individual owners and managers of clans, families or tongs. I am satisfied that the small peasant proprietors will appreciate machinery which will enable disputes about their fields to be promptly settled on the spot. At the same time it is possible that lands may pass into the hands of persons who would prefer that they should be dealt with under the ordinary law of the Colony, and provision is made in the Bill for their being so dealt with.

The Bill to amend the Sugar Convention Ordinance 1904 has been drafted mainly to meet a suggestion which was brought forward but not pressed when the principle Ordinance was before the Council to allow the importation of bounty fed sugar in transit.

You are aware, gentlemen, that the question of destitute Europeans has of late been the subject of considerable discussion in this Colony. The nuisance of vagrants is one that we can hardly hope to do away with altogether, but the Government believe that certain improvements in the methods of dealing with them can be effected: first by making other arrangements than sending those to the House of Detention for

Destitute Seamen who are believed to be thus destitute through no fault of their own; secondly, by making more rigorous the treatment of vagrants in the House of Detention; thirdly, by discouraging the landing of men in the colony likely to become destitute within a very short time of their arrival there. Arrangements have been made with a Benevolent Society in the Colony and with the authorities of the Sailors' Home with regard to the first of these matters. The second and third are dealt with in the Bill before you.

I do not propose to proceed to-day with the fourth Bill that appears on the Order of the Day.

Gentlemen, since we last met, negotiations have been opened at Peking with the Chinese Government for an Agreement for the joint working of a Railway Line of 4ft. 8½ in. gauge from Canton with one from Kowloon to the frontier of the New Territories. It is proposed that this agreement should be on the lines of one concluded by the Colonial Office on behalf of this Government with the British and China Corporation. Before any agreement with the Chinese Government is made binding on that of Hongkong it will be submitted to you. You will doubtless be glad to learn in the meantime that a party of surveyors engaged to locate the line within British territory left England on the 12th of May. (Applause).

Among other matters that are of necessity occupying the attention of the Government at the present time are questions of neutrality arising from the state of war which unfortunately still exists between their Majesties the Emperors of Russia and Japan. This Government adheres and will continue to adhere rigidly to the proclamation of neutrality issued by Mr. May on the 12th February, 1904.

In conclusion it is with some satisfaction that I call your attention to the fact that, so far, the visitation of plague this year has been a mild one. I am not prepared to say that this comparative immunity, which we pray God may continue, is entirely or even mainly due to the sanitary measures taken by the Government and by the Chinese community in concert with the Government. But it is noteworthy that there has been during the last six years a diminution year by year in the general death rate of the Colony which in 1904 was the lowest recorded (Applause).

PAPERS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the following papers:—Report of the Medical Officer of Health, the Sanitary Surveyor and the Colonial Veterinary Surgeon for the year 1904, report of the Superintendent of the Fire Brigade, report of the Captain Superintendent of Police, report of the superintendent of Victoria gaol, report of the Registrar General, New Territories Land Court report on work from 1900 to 1903, report of the Botanical and Afforestation Department and financial return for the same year, Financial minute No. 13, report of the Director of Public Works, report of the principal Civil Medical Officer, report of the Tung Wa Hospital, report of the Po Leung Kuk, report of the Registrar of the Supreme Court, report of the Post Office, and Financial Minutes Nos. 4 to 14,

which he moved be referred to the Finance Committee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded the motion, which was carried.

FINANCIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir, I beg to bring up the report of the Finance Committee No. 1, and move its adoption.

The COLONIAL TREASURER—I beg to second.

The motion was carried.

ADDITION TO OPIUM BYE-LAWS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the addition to bye-law I. of the bye-laws governing opium divans contained in schedule "B" of Ordinance No. I. of 1903, made by the Sanitary Board under Section 16 of the said Ordinance, be approved by this council. The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded the motion, which was carried.

COOLIE SHELTERS.

The Hon. Mr. GERSHOM STEWART put the following question:—

As the public continually find great difficulty in getting chairs whenever it comes on to rain, will the Government provide shelter for the coolies at various important points and pass some regulations to prevent them from deserting their chairs with impunity and leaving them lying in the public road without bearers?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied—The answer to the first part is—Yes. The answer to the second part is that the Police can and will deal with such cases for causing obstruction.

FIRST READINGS.

On the motion of the ATTORNEY GENERAL, seconded by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the following bills were read a first time:—A Bill, entitled, An Ordinance to facilitate the transfer of land in the New Territories and for settling disputes in respect thereof and for other purposes; a Bill, entitled An Ordinance to amend the Sugar Convention Ordinance, 1904; a Bill, entitled, An Ordinance to amend the Vagrancy Ordinance, 1897.

With reference to the first Bill the Hon. Mr. SHEWAN said—I do not wish to raise any discussion now, but Sub-section 4, Clause I. vitiates the whole of this Bill.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL—Questions can be asked at the second reading.

HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR — Council stands adjourned until Thursday, 1st instant.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held after the council—the Colonial Secretary, the Hon. Mr. F. H. May, C.M.G., presiding.

The following votes were passed:—

STAMPS AND STATIONERY CHARGES.

The Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of \$890 in aid of the vote, Stamp Office, other charges, cost of adhesive Stamps, &c., for the year 1904.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—This is a small item remaining over from last year.

EASTERN MAIL SERVICE.

The Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of £5,526 11s. 8d. being the difference between the Contribution of Hongkong towards the Eastern Mail Service for 11 months from 1st February, 1905, at the rate of £12,529 per annum in accordance with the award of Lord Balfour of Burleigh and a Contribution for the same period at the rate of £6,500 per annum as voted in the Estimates for the current year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—This item you will find fully explained in a memorandum on financial minute No. 13.

The Hon. Mr. SHEWAN—Did we agree to submit it to arbitration?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—Yes. That includes our share of the additional £10,000, which is the addition made to the contract now running.

SHIPPING VOTE.

The Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of Two thousand Dollars (\$2,000) in aid of the vote, Harbour Master's Department—Lighthouse, Gap Rock and Wagland Island. Other Charges—for Gunpowder Charges and Tubes for Fog Signalling Guns.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—The excess is due to the extremely foggy weather we had during the first three months of this year.

RIFLE RANGES.

The Government recommended a vote of \$3,600 at 1/8 =£300 in aid of the vote Public Works Extraordinary, for improving Now Rifle Ranges at Kowloon City.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—This is in order to enable new ranges to be put in use, so that the old ranges in the King's Park may be finally dispensed with.

BANKRUPTCY INCREASE.

The Governor recommended a vote of \$900 in aid of the vote, Judicial and Legal Departments, Land Registry Office, Other Charges, for the following items:—Furnitures and Fittings for Official Receiver's Office, \$300; Rent of Official Receiver's Office for eight months from 1st May, 1905, at \$75 per month, \$600; Total \$900.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—The items are principally due to the heavy work in Bankruptcy at the present time necessitating extra accommodation at the Land Office.

POST OFFICE PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS.

The Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of Three thousand nine hundred and thirty-one Dollars (\$3,931.00) in aid of the vote, Post Office, Personal Emoluments, for the following items:—

HONGKONG.—From 1st May to 31st December, 1905.

5 Clerks at \$480 each per annum, =	\$1,600
Do. Allowance for Extra work at \$65 each per annum, =	217
1 Shroff at \$480 per annum, =	320
2 Postmen at \$120 each per annum, =	160
Do. Allowance for Extra work at \$16.50 each per annum, =	22
Do. Lodging allowance at \$24 each per annum, =	32
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	2,351

SHANGHAI.—From 1st January to 31st December, 1905.

2 Clerks at \$660 each, =	\$1,320
Do. Allowance for Extra work at \$130 each, =	260
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	1,580
Total	<hr/>
	\$3,931

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—This is due to an increased staff both in Hongkong and Shanghai.

PUBLIC WORKS RECURRENT AND EXTRAORDINARY.

The Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of Six thousand five hundred and fifty Dollars (\$6,550.00) in aid of the vote Public Works Recurrent and Extraordinary:—

PUBLIC WORKS RECURRENT.

Maintenance of Gas lamps for 3 months,	\$1,050
PUBLIC WORKS EXTRAORDINARY.	
Lighting of the Peak Roads,	5,500
Total,	<hr/>
	\$6,550

The Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of Forty-four thousand seven hundred and ninety-three Dollars (\$44,793) in aid of the votes Public Works Annually Recurrent Expenditure and Public Works Extraordinary, for the following items:—

PUBLIC WORKS ANNUALLY RECURRENT EXPENDITURE.

Maintenance of Telegraphs,	\$ 7,600
PUBLIC WORKS EXTRAORDINARY.	
Disinfecting Station, Kowloon,	2,800
Gunpowder Depôt, Green Island,	34,393
Total,	<hr/>
	\$44,793

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—The first item is principally due to putting in metallic circuiting on lines which have been affected by the Hongkong Lower Level Tramway. The amounts for the Disinfecting Station, Kowloon are for the erection of machinery; and for the Gunpowder Depôt at Green Island are re-votes of money not spent during last year.

The Hon. Mr. STEWART—Are these Government telegraphs?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY — Yes. They are really telephones in the New Territory, but owing to the induction from electric trams they have had to be put in new circuit.

The Hon. Mr. CHATHAM — They are Government appliances.

ARREARS OF P. AND O. SUBSIDY.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY.—This is the Vote referred to in His Excellency's remarks regarding the arrears due to the Imperial Post Office on the contract with the P. and O. Co. which has now expired, I trust that the very full minute prepared by His Excellency himself will explain matters to members.

The Hon. Mr. DICKSON—As the Government has now committed itself to this expenditure, it is hardly worth while referring to it, but I would point out that according to the figures Hongkong pays 30/6 for the oversea mail against the Straits 21/8 and Ceylon 21/2; that is, Hongkong pays 40 per cent more than the Straits Settlements for the sea carriage of its mails.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—As the arbitrator has pointed out this is a matter it is impossible to come to any thoroughly logical conclusion on. Of course, being at the farthest end of the line I am afraid we will have to pay

more. It is one of the disadvantages of being in our somewhat isolated position.

The Hon. Mr. STEWART—Do Shanghai and Yokohama come in this list.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY — The cost of the section between here and Shanghai is entirely debited to the Imperial Government. Notice, for instance, page 22 where the amount is divided among the different sections of the line. After Singapore and Hongkong the next item we come to is Hongkong and Shanghai £15,000 which is entirely debited to the United Kingdom. I thoroughly agree that Shanghai ought to pay something, but it is rather a difficult matter to arrange. We thought at one time—we had not then the figures before us—that we were to be debited with some portion of this section between Hongkong and Shanghai, but we have not been charged with any portion of it.

HARBOUR MASTER'S ADDITIONAL CLERK.

The Governor recommends the Council to vote a sum of Eight hundred and ten Dollars (\$810) in aid of the vote Harbour Master's Department, Personal Emoluments, for Salary of an additional Clerk, and increased Salaries of Clerks from 10th May to 31st December, 1905.

This was all the business.
