

7TH JUNE, 1906.

PRESENT:—

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

HIS EXCELLENCY Major-General VILLIERS HATTON, C.B. (General Officer Commanding the Troops).

Hon. Mr. T. SERCOMBE SMITH (Colonial Secretary).

Hon. Sir H. S. BERKELEY, K.C. (Attorney-general).

Hon. Mr. A. M. THOMSON (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. Dr. Ho KAI, M.B., C.M., C.M.G.

Hon. Mr. WEI YUK.

Hon. Mr. E. OSBORNE.

Hon. Mr. E. A. HEWETT.

Hon. Mr. W. J. GRESSON.

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

MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

NEW MEMBER.

Mr. W. J. Gresson took the oath and assumed his seat as a member of the Council.

FINANCIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY by command of H.E. the Governor laid on the table the report of the Finance Committee No. 3 and moved its adoption.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded and this was agreed to.

QUESTIONS.

Hon. Mr. OSBORNE asked the following questions standing in his name:—

1. Will the Government take steps to improve the ricksha service by—

(a) Requiring them to be more strongly built and provided with better springs.

(b) Instituting a monthly inspection.

(c) Making it a condition of the licence that every ricksha be provided with a clean white cover to the back and to the seat.

(d) Introducing first class rickshas (both for Victoria and Kowloon) similar to those at Saigon.

2. Will the Government make provision in the forthcoming Estimates for—

(a) A market at Tsim-tsa-tsui.

(b) A refuse burner.

3. Will the Government take steps to enquire what practical means can be adopted for reestablishing and maintaining the value of British subsidiary coinage on a par with the dollar.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, replying to the first question, said—The Government have under consideration the question of improving the ricksha service in the Colony on the general lines indicated in the question.

The DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS, replying to the second question, said—(a) It is doubtful whether provision can be made in next year's Estimates for a market at Tsim-tsa-tsui estimated to cost \$80,000.

(b) Plans and estimates for a refuse burner have recently been prepared. The cost of site, buildings and plant will amount to \$450,000 and it is doubtful whether provision can be made for it in next year's Estimates.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, replying to the third question, said—The Government have made enquiries and are satisfied that the only practical means that can be adopted for re-establishing the value of British subsidiary coins is to cease for the time to issue such coins and to induce the Cantonese authorities to stop the issue of Chinese subsidiary coins, the over-production of which combined with depressed trade has brought about the fall in value of both British and Chinese subsidiary currency.

His EXCELLENCY—I propose to supplement the answer given by the Director of Public Works to the hon. member's second question, as the answer he has received will probably not be considered a satisfactory one. But it is obviously impossible for us to say what items are to be included in the Estimates for extraordinary public works until we have an approximate idea what the revenue for the year will be, and it is impossible to get this approximate idea until we know what we shall receive on account of the Opium Farm for which, as the honourable member no doubt is aware, tenders have been invited: the present farm expires on February 28th, 1907. We do, however, know something with regard to our probable revenue for next year, and I am sorry to say that what we know is not very satisfactory. For instance, we are aware we shall be unable to include in our revenue estimates for 1907 the sum which appears in this year's estimates of \$120,000 on account of profit on subsidiary coins. We can fairly assume also that land sales, unless there is a great improvement in trade, will not amount in 1907 to the sum of \$400,000. which appears in the Estimates for the current year. And we can also assume that unless trade improves there will be a falling off in other receipts. Turning next to expenditure, it is on the face of it a little difficult to say how we are going to meet the decline of revenue I have referred to. We know we shall have to provide some amount as interest on the loan for the Kowloon-canton railway: as far as we see at present this interest will come to \$138,500. We know also there will be some increase in expenditure involved by extending the grading scheme of salaries to all subordinate officers. Further, the Government has committed itself to this Council in an expenditure for additional fire-extinguishing appliances estimated to cost some \$50,000. Again, I have promised as the result of earnest representations of public opinion made to me in this Council on the 21st September last year, not further to delay the commencement of the Tytamtuk (second section) water supply scheme, a scheme estimated to cost three million of dollars, and for which, as soon as we are once embarked on it, it will be necessary to make a large appropriation each year. Again, the expenditure on the new Law Courts and Public Offices must next year be at least what it has been this year, if we are to fulfil our promise made to this Council to

complete these two important public buildings by the end of the year 1909. So even if we do not start any public works of great magnitude, in addition to the water supply scheme I have referred to, I am doubtful whether we shall be able to carry on without some additional taxation. When we do start a public work of the first magnitude I am strongly of opinion that work should be the junk typhoon shelter which is required in the interest of shipping in the Colony and for the safety of the Chinese boat population (applause). Apart from those public works, which once put in hand definitely commit us to a large annual expenditure, we are very desirous to do something to improve the approaches of the harbour to the city which at present are rightly termed reproaches to it. We also desire to go ahead with the main thoroughfares at Kowloon, with regard to which, this Council will remember, the gentleman lately representing the Chamber of Commerce on it was so very insistent. We are further anxious to improve the road communications in the New Territories. Moreover, we do not intend to decrease the amounts annually included in the estimates for the resumption of insanitary properties, the training of nullahs and the provision of flushing tanks, with which services it is to my mind absolutely indispensable to proceed if the sanitary condition of the Colony is not to be worse in the future than it has been in the past (applause). It is not with any desire to discourage such questions as have been put by the hon. member, containing as they do valuable and useful suggestions, that I have made these remarks, but I want to make clear that it is necessary for us to proceed in a business manner and, in view of falling receipts, not to commit ourselves to new and heavy items of expenditure. (Applause).

ASYLUMS ORDINANCE

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL moved the first reading of a Bill entitled "An Ordinance to provide for the establishment of Asylums for the custody and care of persons of unsound mind and others."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded, and this was agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill entitled "An Ordinance to authorize the appropriation of a supplementary sum of two hundred and seventy-eight thousand four hundred and twelve dollars and eight cents, to defray the charges of the year 1905." He said—It is unnecessary for me to say anything to the Council in support of the Bill. It is necessary to authorise the payment of various sums stated in the Bill for the various public services to which these sums are appropriated.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and this was agreed to.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL moved that the Bill be referred to the Finance Committee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and this was agreed to.

His EXCELLENCY—The Council stands adjourned till Thursday, June 14th.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held immediately after the Council—the Colonial Secretary presiding.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—His Excellency, at the last meeting of the Council, referred at length to the Appropriation Bill, and honourable members have before them full details. If there are no questions to be asked I propose that the various votes be approved.

The various items were read and approved.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I also wish the Committee to empower me to express the opinion of the Committee that the said Bill may be dealt with by the Council as a Bill reported on by the whole of the Council in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council. That will save us sitting as a committee of the whole Council at the next meeting.

This was agreed to.

LAW COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Law Committee was held afterwards—the Attorney-general presiding.

The Married Women's Property Bill was considered clause by clause, and passed through committee with two verbal amendments.

The Bill to regulate the qualifications and provide for the registration of dentists was considered clause by clause.

On the motion of Dr. Ho KAI Clause 8 referring to the composition of the Dentists Board was altered by the addition, after the words "resident dentists," of the following: "and any two other fit persons willing to accept the appointment who may be from time to time appointed by the Governor."

On the motion of the ATTORNEY GENERAL Sub-section 2 of the same clause was recast and read "An appointed member shall hold office for three years."

Clause 7, Section 3, was altered to read "no person shall be entitled to recover in any action any charge for dental aid rendered after the commencement of this Ordinance by any person not registered under this Ordinance unless and until such person is registered under the Ordinance."

Clause 9, Section 1, was altered to read—"if a person shall prove to the satisfaction of the Dentists Board that he was within three years prior to the passing of the Ordinance a bonafide practitioner of dentistry and a dental surgeon in this Colony and shall make application in writing to the Dentists Board within six weeks after the commencement of the Ordinance for registration or in the case of persons absent from the Colony at the date of the commencement of the Ordinance shall make such application within six months after the passing of the Ordinance he shall be entitled to be registered."

On the motion of the ATTORNEY -GENERAL it was agreed that the Bill be reprinted and discussed again.

