

HONGKONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

23RD JANUARY, 1908.

PRESENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, SIR
FREDERICK JOHN DEALTRY LUGARD,
K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.

HON. MR. F. H. MAY, C.M.G. (Colonial
Secretary).

HON. MR. A. M. THOMSON (Colonial
Treasurer).

HON. MR. W. CHATHAM, C.M.G. (Director of
Public Works).

HON. MR. A. W. BREWIN (Registrar-
General).

HON. COMMANDER BASIL R. H. TAYLOR,
R.N. (Harbour Master).

HON. DR. HO KAI, M.B., C.M., C.M.G.

HON. MR. H. E. POLLOCK, K.C.

HON. MR. E. A. HEWETT.

HON. MR. H. KESWICK.

HON. MR. WEI YUK.

HON. MR. E. OSBORNE.

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

Minutes.

The minutes of the previous meeting were
read, and confirmed.

Financial Minutes.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by
command of His Excellency the Governor, laid
on the table Financial Minutes Nos. 1 and 2, and
moved that they be referred to the Finance
Committee.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded,
and the motion was agreed to.

Papers.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by
command of His Excellency the Governor, laid
on the table the report of the Subsidiary Coinage
Committee and a report of the estimated
expenditure on the Kowloon-canton Railway
(British Section) for the year 1908.

Public Works Committee.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS, by
command of His Excellency the Governor, laid
on the table the Report of the Public Works
Committee (No. 1).

Kowloon-canton Railway Construction.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—I beg that
the resolution standing in my name be in the first
instance referred to the Finance Committee. The
resolution was as follows: "it is hereby resolved
that a sum of Four million, two hundred and fifty
thousand Dollars (\$4,250,000) be advanced out
of funds in the custody of the Government for
the purpose of construction of the Kowloon-
canton Railway (British Section) during the year
1908."

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded,
and the motion was agreed to.

Chinese Emigration Amendment Ordinance

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—In the
absence of my learned neighbour on my left I
beg to move the first reading of a Bill entitled An
Ordinance to amend the Chinese Emigration
Ordinance, 1899.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded,
and the Bill was read a first time.

The Evidence Ordinance.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the first reading of a Bill entitled An Ordinance to facilitate the admission in evidence of Statutes passed by the Legislatures of British Possessions and British Protectorates including Cyprus.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the Bill was read a first time.

The Fire Insurance Companies Ordinance.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the first reading of a Bill entitled an Ordinance to authorise the removal of Fire Insurance Companies from the Register of Companies in certain cases.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the Bill was read a first time.

Fire Brigade Ordinance.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the seconded reading of a Bill entitled An Ordinance to amend the Fire Brigade Ordinance, 1868. He said—In addition, Sir, to the reasons given in the objects and reasons of the Bill, I would say that the object of this Ordinance is to give the Captain Superintendent of Police, who is also Superintendent of the Fire Brigade, the same powers over men under his command in the Fire Brigade as he possesses over men under his command in the Police Force. It is well to bear in mind in this connection that all European members of the Fire Brigade with the exception of two, are also members of the Police Force. Under the regulations which will be framed by the Governor-in-Council under this Bill when it becomes law, the two European members who are not members of the Police Force will not be made subject to the punishments which can be inflicted by the Captain-Superintendent of Police, their ranks being such as to render it undesirable that punishment be inflicted upon them. The remainder of the Brigade are Chinese, and it is extremely desirable that the Superintendent should have power to punish these Chinese firemen directly in the same way as he punishes Chinese constables in the Police Force.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the Bill was read a second time.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY then moved that the Council resolve itself into a committee of the whole Council to consider the Bill clause by clause.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

On Council resuming, the COLONIAL SECRETARY reported that the Bill had passed through committee with a slight amendment.

HIS EXCELLENCY — Council stands adjourned until this day fortnight.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was then held, the COLONIAL SECRETARY presiding. The following votes were passed:—

Sanitary Department.

THE GOVERNOR recommended the Council to vote a sum of Three thousand, four hundred and thirty-three dollars (\$3,433) in aid of the vote, Sanitary Department, Other Charges. Compensation for infected cargo destroyed.

THE CHAIRMAN—This expenditure has been incurred in connection with a consignment of cattle in which anthrax had broken out, and which were returned to Hongkong. It was necessary that certain cargo should be destroyed, and this compensation was assessed under the provisions of the law covering such matters, and it is now desired that the authority of the Council shall be given to pay it.

Squatters' Compensation

THE GOVERNOR recommended the Council to vote a sum of One thousand three hundred and three dollars (\$1,303) as compensation to certain squatters whose removal was necessitated by the sale of Kowloon Inland Lot 1203.

THE CHAIRMAN—This expenditure was incurred as compensation to certain squatters. The Government had promised them other sites, but they preferred to have the hard cash. Accordingly the Government has made this disbursement, and has got the land. I do not know who has made the best bargain, but I fancy the Government has in the long run.

Kowloon-Canton Railway Expenditure.

THE CHAIRMAN—I would invite members' attention to the estimated expenditure paper dealing with the Kowloon-Canton Railway up to December 1908. In connection with that statement I would inform members that the headings of Nos. 3 and 4 columns are not quite as clear as they might be. The heading of No. 3 column reads "estimated total expenditure for 1907." The intention of the draughtsman was that the word "for" should mean "to the end of." It really should be to the end of 1907. The expenditure for 1906 is included in that for 1907. The same explanation applies to the next column. If any member wishes for any information concerning the items appearing under the separate heads I will be glad to give it.

HON. MR. KESWICK—I wish for some information. Does the work actually come up to the expenditure? We are asked to vote the large sum of \$4,250,000, and I am not at all satisfied that we are getting full value for our money as things are going. Before voting on this proposed provision I should like to be satisfied that the work is getting on well, and that the estimates are as correct as can be, otherwise at the end of 1908 we shall have another vote, and be called upon again to make up deficiencies above the estimate.

THE CHAIRMAN—In answer to the first part of what the hon. gentleman said I would like to say that on the whole the progress of the work to date is satisfactory. The main tunnel is not as far forward as the consulting engineer had estimated it would be, but of course in dealing with a tunnel you are really working in the dark; you don't know what difficulties you will meet with, and the tunnel has proved an extremely difficult one so far. I am glad to be able to say that recently the progress in the tunnel has improved very much,

largely owing to the fact that the rock met with is more amenable. At the same time I think it is right to state that the estimate on that particular item of the tunnel will largely exceed the original estimate. In fact, there is no concealing the fact that the estimate for the whole railway is much larger than was originally estimated for.

HON. MR. KESWICK—Can you tell us what the original estimate for the railway was?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—The original estimate was about £550,000.

HON. MR. KESWICK—And at the end of this year we shall have expended \$7,164,461, and the railway will not have been built.

HON. MR. HEWETT—I believe I am right in saying tunnelling is a work of a special nature. Have they got a special engineer in charge of this work, or is it carried on by—

THE CHAIRMAN—The Engineer in charge of the work has had large experience in tunnels, and there is a superintendent who has been in the habit of organising labour in tunnels.

HON. MR. HEWETT—I believe it was not so originally.

THE CHAIRMAN—He came out about four or five months ago, but there is no question of the capacity of the engineer in dealing with tunnels.

HON. MR. HEWETT—I did not question that. It was a question of a man with special training.

HON. MR. POLLOCK—Can we get an estimate of what we have got to pay for the building of the British section?

THE CHAIRMAN—The estimate as it stands is \$8,000,000 exclusive practically of land. There are other items such as workshops, station yard, a considerable expenditure for land and station buildings such as the terminus station.

HON. MR. POLLOCK—Land includes land resumption. That is a particularly big item. I think we should have some information about that.

THE CHAIRMAN—I am unable to place you in possession of all the facts. But since the original estimate was formed a larger view of the interests has been taken, and the Government has recently acquired by resumption Blackhead's Point. That, of course, means a very considerable sum of money.

HON. MR. POLLOCK—How much?

THE CHAIRMAN—The formalities are not actually concluded. I would rather not mention the figure.

HON. MR. KESWICK—Might I refer you to the heading "bridge work." Presumably labour is not cheaper than it has been. Of the estimated three lacs there was only expended two and a half lacs in 1907. The money has all gone and we have not got the bridges. I don't understand how the money has entirely disappeared, even allowing for the increased expenditure on the tunnel. I think it a most unsatisfactory state of affairs.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER—It has not disappeared. It is in the columns.

HON. MR. KESWICK — You have underestimated in certain directions, and starved other work.

THE CHAIRMAN—The explanation of the small expenditure during 1907 on minor bridges was simply this: there was a change in the alignment necessitating a resurvey, and a considerable portion of the line work was not put as far forward as it has been anticipated.

HON. MR. HEWETT—In regard to the change of alignment I understand that a considerable amount of paddy land was destroyed. Is all that loss included in the sum?

THE CHAIRMAN—The expenditure on the embankment, or on the land that has been abandoned?

HON. MR. HEWETT—Was the land paid for?

THE CHAIRMAN—Yes, the land has been paid for.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Might it be told the Council how much was the amount of money that was lost in the mistake in regard to the original alignment?

THE CHAIRMAN—I don't think it was more than \$25,000. Of course this land will be available for resale. We are negotiating at the present time for its sale.

HON. MR. HEWETT—I understand it cannot be irrigated properly; at least a good deal of it.

THE CHAIRMAN—Under the new alignment we have got a shorter route and a better route.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Which you might have got in the first place if a proper survey had been made.

HON. MR. KESWICK—The salaries seem to have increased, and there is a large expenditure on quarters, office expenses, medical charges, etc.

THE CHAIRMAN—Of course the salaries increase as the work progresses. We want more men in the tunnel the further we get in. The expenditure in regard to the quarters is accounted for in this way: Shatin was found to be very malarious, and it was decided on medical advice that the European staff quarters should be at a considerable height above the level of the valley. That necessitated a larger increase in expenditure.

HON. MR. OSBORNE—Might I ask where the money is coming from for this railway?

THE CHAIRMAN—You may remember that in 1905 this Council passed an Ordinance to authorise the Government to borrow a sum not to exceed £2,000,000. Funds for the railway will be borrowed under the authority of the vote under that Ordinance.

HON. MR. OSBORNE—Where is the interest on that money shown?

THE CHAIRMAN—You will find it in the estimates for the current year.

HON. MR. OSBORNE — Is the interest chargeable to general revenue?

THE CHAIRMAN—It is so chargeable.

HON. MR. KESWICK — Then we find ourselves liable for £1,000,000 sterling for a line 22 miles long; that seems to me an exceedingly large sum. I understand the country is difficult and the tunnel will be exceedingly expensive, but it still seems to me that some economies might be made in the execution of the work. A million seems an extraordinary sum for 22 miles of railway.

THE CHAIRMAN—I am not an engineer, but this has been pronounced one of the most difficult pieces of railway work in China.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Of the railways already constructed that may be.

THE CHAIRMAN—Taking it on the whole it is as difficult a bit of railway as you will find anywhere. I think I may say every economy has been observed, and the railway is being built as cheaply as possible. Of course you know where the terminus is going to be, and there is a large reclamation required, and that adds to the expense.

HON. MR. HEWETT—What is the original time in which this railway was to be completed?

THE CHAIRMAN—The engineer in charge hopes to finish about the middle of 1910.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Was that the original estimate? I understood Sir Matthew Nathan said it would be completed in three years.

THE CHAIRMAN—His last estimate was March 1910.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Is there any reasonable ground for saying it will be then completed?

THE CHAIRMAN—It is extremely difficult to say when you are dealing with tunnels. There is not only one tunnel; there is more than one tunnel. The question as to how long it takes to build a tunnel is one that no man could reliably prophesy.

I think myself we will certainly see the railway completed in about three years from date. I think it will be done by that time, and I think it will be completed as soon as the Chinese section. Are members prepared to recommend this vote?

HON. MR. HEWETT—I certainly for one am not. The amount is a large sum of money, and I think we should have more time to consider it. I am certainly not prepared to vote for such a large expenditure on such short notice. I don't know whether the other unofficial members will support me. I have not spoken to them about it.

HON. MR. KESWICK—I think we should have further details as to the work actually completed before voting in favour of such a large sum. I think we ought to be told what we have actually got for our money.

THE CHAIRMAN—There is no desire to rush it through in any way. If members wish for further information, and they give the Government the particular points on which they desire information, I shall inform His Excellency of their desires, and His Excellency will only be too anxious to give all the information in his power, but it would be useful if we could have some definite point on which information is desired.

HON. MR. KESWICK—I think we might take the main heads—What is the total expenditure on land, etc., and then we might be told how far the tunnel has proceeded; how many roads have been built, etc. It is really information on the progress that has been made and what remains to be done that we require—a progress report.

THE CHAIRMAN—With regard to items like land I am not in a position to give you the whole information.

HON. MR. KESWICK—I recognise that there are items that we do not want to publish. We don't wish to embarrass the Government.

HON. MR. OSBORNE—I would like to know whether questions such as the route are decided for us at home by the engineers there or whether the Colonial Officials here decide them?

THE CHAIRMAN—Everything incurring large expenditure is submitted to the Governor, and certainly is not undertaken without this consent.

HON. MR. OSBORNE—The colonists then, practically speaking, control the expenditure, and it is not controlled by the officials at home.

THE CHAIRMAN — No, the Governor certainly controls in this matter. The staff cannot incur large expenditure without consulting the Governor.

HON. MR. KESWICK—Might I ask you do the consulting engineers give an opinion, do they give advice as to the line to be followed?

THE CHAIRMAN — Yes, certainly. The proposals are submitted to the engineers for expert advice, but large expenditures cannot be

undertaken without the approval of the Governor.

HON. MR. OSBORNE—If the consulting engineers decided that a double track was necessary, would they have power to build it whether the Colony wanted it or not?

THE CHAIRMAN—No, not without the consent of the Governor.

HON. MR. KESWICK—Their duty is more technical than otherwise.

THE CHAIRMAN—They are the expert advisers on this particular class of work. I will report these proceedings to His Excellency, and I will undertake to get out a statement which I hope will satisfy you.

The Committee then adjourned.
