

29th December, 1930.

PRESENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR (SIR WILLIAM PEEL, K.B.E., C.M.G.).

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (HON. MR. E. R. HALLIFAX, C.M.G., C.B.E.).

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (HON. MR. C. G. ALABASTER, K.C., O.B.E.).

THE SECRETARY FOR CHINESE AFFAIRS (HON. MR. A. E. WOOD).

THE COLONIAL TREASURER (HON. MR. C. MCL. MESSER, O.B.E.).

HON. MR. H. T. CREASY, C.B.E. (Director of Public Works).

HON. MR. E. D. C. WOLFE, C.M.G. (Inspector General of Police).

HON. COMMANDER G. F. HOLE, R.N. (Retired) (Harbour Master).

HON. DR. A. R. WELLINGTON (Director of Medical and Sanitary Services).

HON. SIR SHOU-SON CHOW, K.T.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.

HON. MR. J. OWEN HUGHES.

HON. MR. R. H. KOTEWALL, C.M.G., LL.D.

HON. MR. J. P. BRAGA.

HON. MR. S. W. TS'O, O.B.E., LL.D.

HON. MR. C. G. S. MACKIE.

HON. MR. J. J. PATERSON.

MR. N. L. SMITH (Deputy Clerk of Councils).

ABSENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE TROOPS (MAJOR-GENERAL J. W. SANDILANDS, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Council were confirmed.

PAPERS.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of H.E. the Governor, laid on the table the following papers:—

Regulation under section 15 of the Wild Birds Ordinance, 1922, on 30th October, 1930.

Notification under section 7 of the Holidays Ordinance, 1912—Saturday, the 27th day of December, 1930, to be observed as a general holiday.

FINANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of H.E. the Governor, laid upon the table the report of the Finance Committee, No. 17 of 22nd December, 1930, and moved that it be adopted.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

H.E. THE GOVERNOR.—As the financial provision asked for was agreed to at the meeting of the Finance Committee on December 22nd, there would seem to be no need for further discussion in this Council.

It appears, however that certain questions were asked in Committee, bearing on Prison diets, more particularly in relation to the recent unfortunate strike in the Gaol, which tend to create the impression that there has been a reduction in the quality or quantity of the regulation diets. I take this opportunity of saying that any saving on the Subsistence Vote does not connote any such reduction. It must be quite well known that, in forming an estimate for such a service for the forthcoming year, it is impossible to estimate requirements accurately. In the first place, at the time the estimates are drawn up, it is not known what the contract rate per diet will be, and in the second place Government of course cannot possibly be aware beforehand of the number of prisoners that will have to be fed. These factors may result in either a saving or an excess of expenditure.

This year there happens to have been a saving. I now give the definite assurance that there has been no reduction in quantity or quality of individual diets, and that in fact any change has been in the direction of an increase. The diets which were in force during the early part of this year have been in force for many years, and have stood the test of time. As, however, it is some 25 years

old at least, Government recently decided to appoint a committee to review the whole scale, and this committee has submitted a report which has been considered by the Executive Council. The report recommends very large increases, and the Executive Council was not satisfied that they were entirely justified, and the recommendations have been referred back to the committee for further investigations. Certain alterations have been allowed in the meantime, but the real problem is not one of dietary but of maintenance of discipline among the prisoners.

It is considered not unlikely that the recent unrest in the Gaol is largely attributable to outside influences, which, in the absence of facilities for segregation, can penetrate to the convicts through the medium of the short sentence prisoners, and in my opinion the question of diets has merely been made the excuse for causing trouble among the prisoners generally.

I am given to understand that in some quarters the satisfactory administration of the Gaol has been called in question. I have no reason to believe that the Government's confidence in the Superintendent and his Staff is misplaced, but I am fully prepared to have the whole administration reviewed. Such review is in fact now in hand from one important angle in the work of the Retrenchment Commission: and their enquiries in the interests of economy can hardly fail to direct attention to existing weaknesses, if indeed such exist, in the general administration. I propose to await the completion of their enquiries, before considering the appointment of a committee to review the general administration. The opinion may safely be hazarded that the criticism of such a committee would centre largely on the inadequate and unsatisfactory nature of the Gaol buildings, a matter to which I am giving anxious and urgent consideration. My settled conviction being that the whole establishment must be moved to buildings of a more modern design in more satisfactory surroundings, I propose to press on to this end with the utmost expedition. I may add that the latest reports indicate that conditions in the Gaol have more or less returned to normal.

The report was adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

H.E. THE GOVERNOR.—As this is the last Council meeting this year, I take the opportunity of thanking both Honourable Members of this Council and those who have acted temporarily on this Council during the year very sincerely for all the advice and help they have given to Government and especially to myself since I assumed office in Hong Kong; and I offer you my best wishes for the forthcoming year which I sincerely trust will bring back a revival of prosperity to this Colony. Council stands adjourned *sine die*.
