

30th January, 1941.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held in the Council Chamber, the acting Colonial Secretary (Hon. Mr. R. A. C. North) presiding.

ALSO PRESENT: —

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Mr. H. R. BUTTERS).

HON. MR. A. B. PURVES (Director of Public Works).

HON. MR. J. J. PATERSON.

HON. MR. S. H. DODWELL.

HON. MR. LO MAN-KAM.

HON. MR. LEO D'ALMADA E CASTRO, JNR.

HON. MR. A. L. SHIELDS.

HON. MR. W. N. T. TAM.

HON. MR. T. E. PEARCE.

HON. MR. LI TSE-FONG.

MR. C. B. BURGESS (Deputy Clerk of Councils).

Votes totalling \$599,634 under Estimates 1940-41, contained in message No. 12 from His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, were considered.

Item 287. —22, Charge on Account of Public Debt: —Interest on 3½% Dollar Loan, 1940, \$206,325.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —I would like to interrupt with an explanation on this item. As I explained in my Budget speech, Government itself took up part of this Loan, so part of the interest charges is payable to Government. Also a large proportion of the balance is on deposit and earns interest. The actual cost to Government is much smaller than this vote would indicate.

HON. MR. SHIELDS. —Is that the balance?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —No, that is the gross total. The rest goes into the revenue amount.

Item 299. —30, Public Works Extraordinary: —Miscellaneous: Alterations to Four Godowns for Use as an Immigration Depot, \$24,600.

HON. MR. LI. —What is the rent payable on these godowns? Only structure alterations and repairs, electrical works and water supply and drainage are mentioned here. There is nothing about rent.

THE CHAIRMAN. —The rent is \$240 per mensem each.

HON. MR. LI. —Is the lease for a long term?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —I think it is only for a year.

HON. MR. LI. —I think it is a lot of money to spend for such a short time.

THE CHAIRMAN. —That is the only information I have—\$240 a month reduced from \$265. The Government Assessor considers the amount fair.

HON. MR. D'ALMADA. —If we get notice to quit at the end of the year it means we are paying at the rate of \$3,000 a month for the four godowns for the year.

THE CHAIRMAN. —The lease is for one year. If Government wants the property for another year, the lease can be extended for a similar period if three months' notice is given.

HON. MR. LO. —I think we must have a dépôt.

HON. MR. PEARCE. —Yes, I think so, I don't like to mention it at this time, but there was a complaint only yesterday, that the immigration authorities were so slow in boarding one ship that there was a delay of two and a half hours before anyone appeared. I grant you that the department is new and I don't suppose they have the organisation going as yet, but the point is that they do want some central place to handle this sort of thing and the sooner the better, for time is important.

HON. MR. SHIELDS. —What are the hours of the Immigration Office? Do they get overtime for going out before breakfast or after tea?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —I have received no application for such yet.

HON. MR. SHIELDS. —It a Government Marine Surveyor stays out an extra hour he gets overtime.

HON. MR. LO. —I believe they have been working at all hours from early morning till night. That is what I am told. The whole staff is working.

All the votes were approved.