

*6th March, 1941.*

**PPRESENT:** —

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE TROOPS, (MAJOR-GENERAL A. E. GRASETT, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.).

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (HON. MR. N. L. SMITH, C.M.G.) (President).

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

THE SECRETARY FOR CHINESE AFFAIRS (HON. MR. R. A. C. NORTH).

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY (HON. MR. R. R. TODD, *Acting*).

HON. DR. P. S. SELWYN-CLARKE, M.C., (Director of Medical Services).

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

HON. MR. C. G. PERDUE (Commissioner of Police, *Acting*).

HON. MR. W. J. CARRIE (Chairman of the Urban Council).

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).

**ABSENT:** —

HIS EXCELLENCY THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT (LIEUT-GENERAL E. F. NORTON, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.).

**ANNOUNCEMENT.**

THE PRESIDENT. — Gentlemen, — I regret to announce that His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government is unfortunately still indisposed and has appointed me, in accordance with Article XXI of the Royal Instructions, to preside at this meeting.

**MINUTES.**

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

**NEW MEMBER.**

The Hon. Mr. R. R. Todd (Financial Secretary, *Acting*) made affirmation and assumed his seat as a member of the Council.

**PAPERS.**

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, by command of H.E. the Officer Administering the Government, laid on the table the following papers: —

Additional regulation made by the Officer Administering the Government under the Emergency Powers (Colonial Defence) Order in Council, 1939, and the Emergency Powers (Colonial Defence) (Amendment) Order in Council, 1940, to the Defence Regulations, 1940, dated 11th February, 1941.

The Chief Security Officer appointed by the Officer Administering the Government to be a competent authority for the purpose of regulation 59A of the Defence Regulations, 1940, dated 11th February, 1941.

Amendment made by the Governor in Council under section 16 of the Essential Commodities' Reserves Ordinance, 1939, Ordinance No. 38 of 1939, to Form No. 2 in the Schedule to the Essential Commodities Reserves Regulations, dated 10th February, 1941.

Amendment made by the Governor in Council under section 3 of the Adulterated Food and Drugs Ordinance, 1935, Ordinance No. 8 of 1935, to the regulations, dated 10th February, 1941.

Order made by the Controller of Trade under Regulation 50 of the Defence Regulations, 1940, with the consent of the Officer Administering the Government, prohibiting the movement of rice within the waters of the Colony except by licence, dated 14th February, 1941.

Roll of Midwives certified under the Midwives Ordinance, 1910, Ordinance No. 22 of 1910, and authorized to practise in the Colony during the year 1941, dated 3rd February, 1941.

Amendment made by the Governor in Council under section 39 of the Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 1899, Ordinance No. 10 of 1899, to Table U in the regulations to the said Ordinance, dated 17th February, 1941.

Resolution made and passed by the Legislative Council under section 4 of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, 1931 Ordinance No. 36 of 1931, on the 20th February, 1941, relating to duties on hydrocarbon oils.

Resolution made and passed by the Legislative Council under sections 3 and 4 of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, 1931, Ordinance No. 36 of 1931, on the 20th February, 1941, relating to duty on table waters.

Resolution made and passed by the Legislative Council under section 4 of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, 1931, Ordinance No. 36 of 1931, on the 20th February, 1941, relating to duties on liquors.

Rules made by the Officer Administering the Government under regulation 18 (4) of the Defence Regulations, 1940, dated 6th February, 1941.

Appointment of a Food and Firewood Control Board by the Officer Administering the Government to advise him in matters concerning those two commodities, dated 21st February, 1941.

Order made by the Controller of Trade under regulation 50 of the Defence Regulations, 1940, with the consent of the Officer Administering the Government, prohibiting the export, except by licence, of binoculars or other similar optical instruments, dated 21st February, 1941.

Amendments made by the General Officer Commanding the Troops under section 10 of the Volunteer Ordinance, 1933, Ordinance No. 10 of 1933, with the approval of the Governor, after consultation with the Commandant of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, to the regulations, dated 13th February, 1941.

Proclamation No. 2. —Appointment of Commissioners to inquire into the administration of the Immigration Department.

Administration Reports, 1939: —

Part I. —General Administration: —

Report of the Superintendent of Imports and Exports.

**ENTERTAINMENTS DUTY.**

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. — I rise to move the following resolution: —

Resolved pursuant to sections 3 and 5 of the Entertainments Tax ordinance, 1930, as amended by the Entertainments Tax Amendment Ordinance, 1941, that as from the 1st day of April, 1941, the rates of Entertainments Duty at present in force be abolished and that Entertainments Duty at the following rates be substituted therefor: —

## RATES OF ENTERTAINMENTS DUTY

Amount of payment.	Rate of duty.
Where the amount of payment for admission, excluding the amount of the duty—	
does not exceed 4 cents .....	Free.
exceeds 4 cents and does not exceed 10 cents ..	1 cents.
exceeds 10 cents and does not exceed 20 cents	2 cents.
exceeds 20 cents and does not exceed 35 cents	5 cents.
exceeds 35 cents and does not exceed 60 cents	10 cents.
exceeds 60 cents and does not exceed \$1.00 ....	20 cents.
exceeds \$1.00 and does not exceed \$1.40 .....	30 cents.
exceeds \$1.40 and does not exceed \$2.00 .....	40 cents.
exceeds \$2.00 and does not exceed \$3.00 .....	50 cents.
exceeds \$3.00 and does not exceed \$4.00 .....	70 cents.
exceeds \$4.00 and does not exceed \$5.00 .....	\$1.00.
exceeds \$5 .....	\$1.30 for the first \$5.00 and 30 cents for each additional dollar or part thereof.

In his Budget speech to this Council on 16th January, 1941, the Financial Secretary, the Honourable Mr. Butters, stated that Government proposed to increase the rates of Entertainments Tax in order to raise more revenue to meet the heavy expenditure, especially war expenditure, which will be incurred during the coming financial year 1941-42.

Action has had to be delayed, however, to allow of an amendment to the Entertainments tax Ordinance. The effect of this amendment, which was passed at the last meeting of this Council, is to reduce the duty-free limit from 20 cents to 4 cents. Since the introduction of an Entertainments Tax in this Colony—on the 1st January, 1931—up to the present no tax has been levied where the amount of payment for admission to an entertainment does not exceed 20 cents. Apart from the prices of admission to football matches where considerable sections of the seats are sold at 20 cents and under, it is estimated that in respect of cinemas the aggregate amount paid for admissions at 20 cents and under is about equal to the total amount paid at other admission prices: there are indeed about fifteen cinemas in the Colony which do not charge more than 20 cents for any of their seats. Government considers that in present circumstances this source of revenue should no longer be left untapped and believes that the rates of duty proposed for these very cheap seats will not press heavily on the less fortunate members of the community. In passing I would add that in the Straits Settlements there is no duty-free limit corresponding to our limit of 4 cents; the minimum duty there is 5 cents Straits currency or nearly ten times as much as our minimum of 1 cent.

Where the amount of payment for admission exceeds 20 cents the effect of the proposed new rates is, generally speaking, to double the amount of duty payable. The number of steps in the scale has, however, been increased so that the duty payable on the cheaper prices of admission is not out of proportion.

In the printed Estimates for 1941-42 the revenue from Entertainments Tax is shown at the figure of \$350,000; it is anticipated that the increased rates will bring in an additional \$300,000, making a total of \$650,000.

The date chosen for the imposition of the revised rates is 1st April, 1941. This is convenient in that it is the beginning of the new financial year; it will also give the proprietors of places of entertainment sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements for the printing of new tickets, the over-printing of old tickets, etc.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL seconded, and the motion was carried.

#### **APPROPRIATION FOR 1941-42 BILL, 1941.**

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY moved the second reading of a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to apply a sum not exceeding Fifty-two

million four hundred and eighty-three thousand two hundred and ninety-four Dollars to the Public Service of the financial year beginning on the 1st April, 1941, and ending on the 31st March, 1942, and also to apply an additional sum not exceeding Eight hundred and thirty-two thousand Dollars to the Waterworks Renewals and Improvements Fund for the service of that Fund in the said financial year.”

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL seconded, and the Bill was read a second time.

#### **MEDICAL REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL, 1941.**

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill intituled “An Ordinance to amend the Medical Registration Ordinance, 1935.”

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a second time.

#### **HONG KONG CORPS OF AIR RAID WARDENS AMENDMENT BILL, 1941.**

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Hong Kong Corps of Air Raid Wardens Ordinance, 1940."

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a second time.

On the motion of the Attorney General, seconded by the Financial Secretary, Council then went into Committee to consider the following Bills clause by clause: —

#### **APPROPRIATION FOR 1941-42 BILL, 1941.**

#### **MEDICAL REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL, 1941.**

#### **HONG KONG CORPS OF AIR RAID WARDENS AMENDMENT BILL, 1941.**

Upon Council resuming.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY reported that the Appropriation for 1941-42 Bill, 1941, had passed through Committee without amendment, and moved the third reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL seconded, and the Bill was read a third time and passed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL reported that the Medical Registration Amendment Bill, 1941, had passed through Committee without amendment, and moved the third reading.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a third time and passed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL reported that the Hong Kong Corps of Air Raid Wardens Amendment Bill, 1941, had passed through Committee without amendment, and moved the third reading.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a third times and passed.

### ADJOURNMENT.

THE PRESIDENT. —Council stands adjourned *sine die*.

### FINANCE COMMITTEE.

Following the Council, a meeting of the Finance Committee was held, the Colonial Secretary presiding.

The Director of Medical Services (the Hon. Dr. P. S. Selwyn-Clarke, M.C.), the Chairman of the Urban Council (the Hon. Mr. W. J. Carrie) and the Deputy Director of Health Services (Dr. N. C. Macleod) attended by invitation.

THE CHAIRMAN. —We are meeting, as I promised in my speech winding up this Budget Debate, to consider again this question of nightsoil removal. The question is merely whether the Medical Department and Health Officers should be authorised to go ahead with the expenditure which has been put in and passed in the annual Budget for next year. It has always been assumed, as stated by the Financial Secretary in his introductory speech on the Budget, that this will mean an addition to the rates of one per cent. I have asked the Director of Medical Services to state his case for early proceeding with this work.

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —Sir, I feel that I have an apology to make to you and to the Honourable Unofficial Members of Finance Committee in having failed to place myself at your disposal during the deliberations on the draft Estimates for 1941-42 at which the financial provision for a departmental system of nightsoil collection and disposal was considered.

I trust that the Honourable Unofficial Members will accept this sincere apology. As you mentioned, Sir, at an informal meeting of this Committee last week, circumstances were such as to make it difficult, at the time, to arrange for those most concerned in the proposal to attend. I refer to Government's adviser on medical and health matters and to the Honourable the Chairman of the Urban Council who is the executive authority for giving practical effect to proposals in relation to city cleansing, and so on, as may be approved by Government and for

which his staff are directly responsible. I shall do my best to make amends by placing before Honourable Members of this Committee the various points in support of the scheme. I am happy in the knowledge that Honourable Members have come to this meeting with an open mind. What are the facts before us? In spite of a century of rapid progress, and possibly on account of that almost mushroom-like development which has taken place, changing a barren rock into a beautiful city and one of the finest harbours in the world, it has not been found practical up to the present to keep pace with the fundamental needs of the community, one of which relates to the efficient collection and disposal of human wastes. Although the urban area has a very fair departmental organisation for the collection and transport to relatively satisfactory dumps of domestic, communal and trade wastes, the reverse is the case in relation to human nightsoil.

Owing to certain serious difficulties in connexion with harbour development which it is hoped will be solved this year as the result of Sir David Owen's investigations, it has not been found practicable yet to lay public sewers in several parts of the town. There are many houses, of modern construction, especially in Kowloon, where the unfortunate occupants are condemned to put up with the dry, bucket system instead of disposal by water-carriage. In many cases and for one reason or another, residents are even denied the use of septic tanks as an alternative.

To put the matter shortly, hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants of Hong Kong in the year 1941 are dependent upon a bucket system for the removal of their wastes. In the summer of 1939, when I made careful investigations into this question preparatory to submitting a resolution to the Urban Council of which I happened to be Vice-Chairman then, I ascertained that there were over 65,000 buckets in use in the urban area and that the number of persons served amounted to over 500,000.

Now, as Honourable Members are aware, the legal requirements are as follows under By-law 4 of the Conservancy By-laws in Schedule A of Ordinance No. 15 of 1935:—

“The occupier of any premises which are situated within any of the districts specified in by-law 2, (*i.e.* within the Urban District of the Island of Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Kowloon) or, if there be no occupier the owner or immediate landlord, shall, . . . . make due provision for the daily removal of all excretal matter from such premises for delivery thereof to the servants of a conservancy contractor or to servants of the Sanitary Department appointed for the purpose, and shall not dispose of any such excretal matter in any other manner. He shall also afford access to any servant of a conservancy contractor or of the Sanitary Department for the purpose of the removal of excretal matter from any part of the premises . . . .”

I regret to say that this by-law is *not* carried out in many cases. It would require an army of inspectors and dozens of magistrates to enforce it adequately, because it costs less to the individual to have buckets of nightsoil removed on alternate days or twice a week or even once a week than if he complies with the by-law and arranges for daily removal.

On Analysis, about 15% of householders paid for daily removal, 75% for removal every other day and 10% for removal at longer intervals. These figures, indicating that 85% failed to comply with the legal requirements, provide yet another reason for a reorganisation of the whole system.

When we enquire more fully into the present system, we find that a householder either retains the services of a coolie—who may be a man or woman—or else is served by a contractor who, in turn, often employs a sub-contractor who pays the coolie.

Contractors and sub-contractors are not in the business for the good of their health or because they are so public-spirited that they feel that they should furnish a service which the Government has failed to give up to the present. I hasten to assure Honourable Members that I speak in no spirit of cynicism. After all, some of us are, perhaps, misguided enough to choose to be shipping and industrial magnates, bankers, solicitors, barristers and even doctors—the old tag of “tot homines, quot sententiae” —so why not nightsoil contractors.

My reason for mentioning this point is that the present system (which all of us agree is bad) is based upon profit motive. In other words, the contractor or sub-contractor is interested in obtaining his fee and not in ensuring that this public utility service is carried out expeditiously, regularly and with due regard to the rights and comforts of those whom he “serves” and public health interests. It matters not to him so long as he can obtain enough clients who will pay him 30 cents a month for, say, a weekly or bi-weekly removal of the overflowing bucket from a crowded tenement, whether this is an open defiance of the law and whether his so-called “service” entails removal by his men of buckets in a half or a third or a quarter of the tenements scattered throughout a single street, the other portions being dealt with by one, two or more individuals or gangs of men employed by the householder or by other contractors or sub-contractors. What effect has this chaotic system on the coolie actually doing the work? At best, he wastes time and energy in going from one area to another, his wages are what remain over *after* the contractor or sub-contractor is able or willing to pay him. What does he do to try to make ends meet? He takes or more than he can honestly manage. He empties his buckets almost as frequently into the surface-water drains or on to open spaces or on to other unauthorised spots which give rise to nuisance and danger to health as he does into the Sanitary Department nightsoil barges. Moreover, there is evidence that a number of these men endeavour to increase their meagre wages by asking the householders for a small monthly “cumshaw” apart from the conservancy fee.

Honourable Members are, I fear, tired of bearing of all the suffering and, indeed, deaths which may follow in the train of faulty systems of disposal human waste; consequently, I do not propose to wave before your faces Koch's Cholera vibrio, Eberth's Typhoid bacterium or one of the many types of the Dysentery bacilli, although each and every one of them are responsible for a heavy toll, year by year.

I would like to read a special report sent to me on the 4th March by Professor Robertson, Professor of Pathology at the University. It reads: "As an extension of my February report on the Victoria Mortuary, I may mention, in view of the urgency of the matter, that six cases of Cholera confirmed bacteriologically have occurred between March 1st and 3rd. Many of these cases are from the streets and sent in from Police Stations."

The Professor considered the matter so important that on March 4th he sent in this report. As you know, since that date we have had a flare-up of the cases of Cholera and so far, in spite of the cold season, there have been 36 cases with 20 deaths already.

You may well ask: "What is the main feature of the proposed improvements in the existing system, pending the substitution at some future date of an up-to-date water-borne sewerage scheme for this unhygienic and offensive anachronism?" The proposals envisage the employment by the Sanitary Department of coolies who will operate under reliable overseers in organised groups. They will collect the 65,000—70,000 buckets *daily* and dispose of their contents in a manner which will not be a danger to health. If, as not infrequently happens, a coolie engaged in this work falls ill and ceases to be available for duty, his absence from regular roll call will be duly noted and a substitute will be engaged at once to do his work. These men will be so distributed that their work will involve the least possible waste of time and re-crossing of tracks as happens under the present chaotic arrangements. "Will this throw a certain number of coolies out of work?" The answer is "Yes, those who are found to be physically incapable of doing their duty efficiently and those who are found to be unreliable and dishonest or guilty of extortion or corruption." My Honourable friend, the Chairman of the Urban Council will, I think, assure you that he will engage as many men as possible from amongst those engaged in this work at present, subject to the conditions which I have just indicated. It is possible that my Honourable friend might be willing to engage some of the women, too, although this is not very desirable since they usually have children to care of (if they are not actually bearing them) and they are likely to be engaged in handling food for a family or group of persons and, hence, might carry infection.

You ask: "Why should these men work better under a departmental system than they do at present?" My reply is that they will be working for a not unreasonable wage and will, it is hoped, enjoy other privileges similar to those shared by employees of Government departments, such as medical care, gratuities or pensions on retirement,

quarters, and so on. For this very reason, it is the firm belief of my colleagues and myself that a far higher standard of service can be expected (and demanded) under the proposed scheme.

"Will they all be little angels with downy wings?" Certainly not! No one suggests that there will not be instances of slackness or disobedience of orders, but it stands to reason that a disciplined body of men will perform their duties far more satisfactorily than disorganised rabble.

Overseers and inspectors responsible to the head of the Sanitary Department (and so to the Urban Council) will be appointed to exercise adequate supervision over the groups of departmental coolies.

"Why not be content with appointing just these Overseers and Inspectors and leave the system as it is?" you ask. Because you would almost need one Overseer for every free-lance coolie who would snap his fingers at the Overseer. "He who pays the piper calls the tune" undoubtedly applies to work of this nature. I have mentioned earlier other reasons why such a hybrid system cannot operate effectively.

Now the time may not be so far distant when it may be found necessary to expand suddenly the bucket system of nightsoil removal. It is well-known to every person present at this meeting that sewerage systems have broken down over considerable districts in a single air raid. Even when the deep laid sewers themselves escape, the water mains and connexions and, possibly, reservoirs are seriously damaged and there is no water to operate a flush system. Is this Colony so far removed from the war that it can afford to emulate the ostrich? It is obvious from the very energetic way in which defence measures have been pressed forward that those who are best qualified to judge consider that we should be prepared for all possible emergencies. I wonder if it has occurred to the man-in-the-street that someone may have to devise at a moment's notice a bucket system for offices, residences, hotels and the like, if ever this Colony becomes involved directly in hostilities. Under certain conditions, we may *all* have to revert to the antiquated bucket system. Surely, it is obvious that a trained and disciplined group of coolies under departmental control can be relied upon to meet such a situation far better than the freelance coolies. These trained men would be used to leaven, as it were, the considerable additions of untrained men who would have to be drafted in to meet such an emergency. At such a time, the Health and Sanitary Authorities would have to use considerable ingenuity and initiative, since nightsoil barges would no longer operate and other methods of disposal would have to be devised at once and in such a way as not to endanger the water supply and the health of the defenders and of community as a whole.

The departmental collection of nightsoil is, of course, merely the first stage in re-organising the present dangerous system. Later, a complete double bucket scheme and motor conservancy lorries and steam

sterilising depots will be brought into use. There are obvious difficulties at the moment in the way of obtaining the necessary metal, seated containers and lorries and the ships to carry them, but this does not provide any excuse for leaving things as they are.

One further point, nightsoil is a valuable fertiliser; it can be rendered relatively innocuous to life and health by certain treatment. The Colony needs cheap supplies of fertiliser to develop its submarginal lands (such as those contemplated in the village settlement schemes on Lantau and in the Port Shelter region) and to increase food crops in the New Territories as a whole. Much of this valuable material is literally "going down the drain" at present, and not into sewers but into drains not intended for such purposes. I leave Honourable Members to imagine the inevitable results. A fully departmentally controlled system should end this wastage to a very large extent.

Now as to the financial aspect. When I moved my resolution originally in the Urban Council on the 12th of July, 1939, I suggested two possible alternatives to meet costs; firstly, to require the landlord or principal tenant to pay an equitable sum for the service. I pointed out that on the basis of the buckets then in use a sum of about \$785,088 per annum would be obtained at \$1 per bucket per month; secondly, and I submitted that this was a simpler solution, would be to levy a conservancy rate at, say, 1¼ per centum.

On the basis of the assessment at that time this rate would have brought in about \$524,000 per annum and the total rates would still be below those prevailing in our sister city of Singapore and at Shanghai. The second alternative is the more attractive and the Honourable Mr. H. R. Butters in his very able Budget speech indicated the more obvious reasons for this. It is contended that the community pays something in the neighbourhood of this sum already for a thoroughly unsatisfactory "service" and one which is open to all the objections of which I have endeavoured to outline a few.

My colleague in charge of the Health Division of the Medical Department and I, as Government's advisers in Medical and health matters, are absolutely convinced as to the desirability of this reorganisation. We both feel that the situation brooks not a moment's delay. My Honourable friend the Chairman of the Urban Council is satisfied that the Sanitary Department can give the required service if approval is given for the expenditure. The Urban Council unanimously adopted a resolution on the 8th of October, 1940, "that this Council do recommend that the Sanitary Department be authorised, as soon as possible, to organise, equip and carry out a departmental system for the collection of nightsoil from private premises".

The Press of this Colony which is an excellent mirror of public opinion, has given the proposal its warm support.

I would earnestly appeal to Honourable Members to give approval not only to the expenditure of the funds which you have wisely agreed should be included in the Estimates for 1941-42, but also to the comparatively small sum which the Honourable the Chairman of the Urban Council needs this month in order to allow of the operation of the vastly improved and organised system of collection of nightsoil from the very first day of the coming financial year.

I commenced with an apology. I end with an even more sincere one for taking up the valuable time of Honourable Members in observations on a subject so redolent of those not so "spicy, garlic smells" of which the late Rudyard Kipling sang in his poem "On the Road to Mandalay."

THE CHAIRMAN. —The question is whether it is worth going ahead with half the scheme instead of waiting and bringing in a full scheme.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —At the outset I would like to say that I did not know beforehand what the Director of Medical Services had to say.

I am glad of this opportunity to make a few personal explanations, to defend the Urban Council and to correct some mistaken impressions that must have resulted from the speeches made in Legislative Council on this subject

I have no wish to indulge in recrimination but I feel it is my duty to the Urban Council to rebut some of the arguments put forward by the Hon. Mr. W. N. Thomas Tam, some of whose statements have been resented by members of the Urban Council and were in my opinion based on insufficient and in some cases inaccurate information.

Mr. Tam himself condemns the present system but at the same time implores the Government, before committing itself, to "examine carefully and find out exactly what are the improvements and advantages attached to departmental collection." The Government has already made a most careful examination by means of the Urban Council, which I would remind you is the body specially appointed by Government to be responsible for the sanitary maintenance of the urban area of the Colony. A Select Committee of the Council was appointed in July, 1939, on the direct instructions of His Excellency the Governor, Sir Geoffrey Northcote, and the resolution was the outcome of the examination made by that Committee which, owing to a variety of circumstances, extended over a period of 15 months. What further examination could be made by Government, I cannot imagine.

The Select Committee of the Urban Council worked out a full scheme, thoroughly revolutionising the collection of nightsoil in Hong Kong. The full scheme includes the two bucket system, steel buckets with close fitting lids which will be conveyed through the city, unopened,

by motor transport, and mechanical washing and sterilization of the soiled buckets before returning them next day. But it is not possible to inaugurate this ideal system at once. War conditions prevent the acquisition of sufficient steel plate to make the buckets and motor transport is not easily obtained to-day. It is only proposed to proceed with the first stage in the next financial year.

This first stage does not appear on the surface to be any very great improvement over the methods used to-day. We shall still employ wooden buckets and human transport. But I can assure you there will be very great reorganisation. Collection to-day is carried out in a very haphazard way. In the lower levels a man can clear 20, 30, 40 or even 50 floors a night, making it dozen or more journeys to the nightsoil boats; but in the upper levels, Caine Road, etc, three or four journeys to the boats are quite a good night's work. A man's remuneration depends on the number of premises he clears and the tendency therefore is to undertake more than he can accomplish. He is unable to carry it all to the boats and it is got rid of surreptitiously. We hope to remedy these defects.

It has been suggested that because we cannot bring in at once the full scheme which we have planned it is not worth while doing anything. Gentlemen, this is a very big organisation to carry through, and, speaking personally, I should much prefer to start in a small way and gradually bring in the improvements we have in mind. If I could obtain all the steel plate we want and hundreds of motor vehicles I should still ask no more than I do for this next year. To start from scratch and bring in at once an entirely new system would be almost impossible.

I have explained the wide research undertaken by this Select Committee of the Urban Council. Their report was adopted unanimously by the Urban Council, not one member of which was absent on the day we fully discussed the matter. Was it fair then to this responsible body of men that Mr. Tam should suggest that all they had in mind was to supply the 2,000 or so coolies now doing this work with hat bands marked "Sanitary Department"?

A proposal to license the existing coolies has received a considerable amount of support and was described by Mr. Tam as "an alternative and a more satisfactory solution." The words "more satisfactory" have rankled in the minds of those who have made a close study of this problem. I shall shortly describe to you the labour conditions of the men and women who follow this essential but obviously distasteful occupation. Licensing will not improve these conditions and in these circumstances supervision or control would be impossible. This proposal was considered by the Urban Council and rejected by it. For a time, suspecting opposition on the financial side, the Council worked out a scheme for entrusting this work to a Public Utility Company or in other words to a single monopoly contractor. This

would perhaps be better than a multitude of small contractors, and I have a thick file of applications from people anxious to pay large sums of money to Government for such a contract. There is a lot of money to be made out of it but not all of it legitimately. I submit that the public should get any profit that may accrue by Government operating the service themselves.

Mr. Tam then went on to say that "judging by the many representations which have been made the coolies themselves do not appear to show any enthusiasm." I should not have thought that the opinion of the coolies was in any way relevant and I am also quite unaware that any representations have been made by the coolies themselves. I am confident that the general labour conditions of the coolies and their remuneration will be improved under the departmental system.

If Mr. Tam is referring to the spate of petitions, letters, and so forth which has flowed from the Luen Yip Kung Wui, which erroneously calls itself the Nightsoil Coolies Guild, his premiss is wrong. The Luen Yip Kung Wui is not a labour union of workers but is a guild of employers, the contractors who have a stranglehold on nightsoil collection in Hong Kong. It is not surprising that they show no enthusiasm for they will lose their profits, if collection is carried out by Government but I submit most earnestly that these contractors, men and women, are parasites and that to listen to their representations is to support vested interests of a most deplorable kind.

Let me tell you a short story. I have been told that this proposal will bring ruin to poor widows and others whose only means of living is through nightsoil collection. I enquired regarding one of these "poor widows"; I found that she collected about \$100 a month from some 150-200 floors. She employed her son-in-law and two or three fokis to carry out the actual collection. Altogether I should be surprised if her wages bill exceeded half the sum which she collected. From enquiries made I find that the normal rule is that the coolie who does the work gets 40% of the fee collected. This "poor widow" then has \$50 in her pocket every month for doing absolutely nothing. Multiply this case a hundredfold and you have an insight into the conditions in which nightsoil is collected in Hong Kong. No business could be carried on satisfactorily if 60% of its income was at once swallowed up in overhead charges; nor can you get satisfactory labour for 40% of what is considered a fair fee for the work to be done. Licensing the coolies would not alter the position. A clean sweep of the present organisation is necessary.

The question before you, Gentlemen, is a very simple one. Is it better that this essential service, potentially highly dangerous, should be in the hands of people who only wish to make money out of it or should it be in the hands of the Government whose only object is to safeguard the health of the community.

HON. MR. PATERSON. —As far as I am concerned I want to be shown that the new scheme is going to be better than the old one and it is not very clear to me that it is. I appreciate the harrowing story of the importunate widow who puts \$50 in her pockets without doing anything, but it does seem to me that some form of control could be enforced on the present system, and thus we could avoid swopping horses while we are crossing the stream. After all, we have to use the same coolies, as I see it.

HON. MR. LO. —Before my general remarks there are one or two questions I had in mind. The first is that if the Urban Council is so terribly anxious to ensure proper removal of nightsoil and does recognise that the flush system is better, can the Chairman of the Urban Council or the Honourable Director of Medical Services explain why they have repeatedly rejected applications from the Homuntin district where they want the flush system and agree to put up a septic tank? I myself have interviewed the Chairman of the Urban Council and have moved some resolution in the Urban Council but every time it was turned down. Why is it they refused a simple application by people who want water closets and to put in a septic-tank?

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —My Honourable Friend Mr. Lo may not have heard the reference which I made in my address to the investigations which had just been completed by Sir David Owen in connexion with harbour development and is therefore unable to appreciate my point which is that Government, up to the present, has been unable to lay down public sewers in some parts of the city.

HON. MR. LO. —Excuse me, but I heard you quite clearly. I am talking about septic tanks, and surely if we have sufficient of these it does not matter about drains. It will be turned into water. Why were applications to instal septic tanks in Homuntin refused?

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —One answer is that up to the present the Water Authorities consider that there is not enough water to have an unlimited number of such tanks.

HON. MR. LO. —It seems the Urban Council refused the construction of wells too, on the ground that there was insufficient water.

THE CHAIRMAN. —A few might be allowed, but we are talking about hundreds of thousands of people.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —I don't think you can blame the Urban Council. The objection was made by the P.W.D.

HON. MR. LO. —I am glad to hear of this for it may mean that the Urban Council will in future give its support to these applications. The second point I want to clear up is this: Is it true that up to October and before the Honourable Mr. Carrie's return the whole of

the Urban Council, including Dr. Macleod, were in favour of entrusting the removal of nightsoil to a public utility company?

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —It was suggested only because there might be difficulty on the financial side and as a last resort.

HON. MR. LO. —They agreed to it until you came.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —Only as a last resort.

HON. MR. LI. —Not the Urban Council, but the Select Committee.

HON. MR. TAM. —Including Dr. Macleod, who now says there is no possibility of a compromise though he was willing to accept a compromise in October.

HON. MR. LO. —That really is all I want to ask the experts on this question, though I have some views to express as between members of the Finance Committee. To begin with, I would like to comment on that part of Mr. Carrie's speech where he says the Urban Council resented Mr. Tam's speech. I think the resentment should be on the part of the Council over Dr. Macleod's speech at the meeting before we were to discuss it privately. I don't see any ground for resenting any remarks made by Mr. Tam as a member of this Council. Mr. Carrie has made a great point that the Urban Council, entrusted with this matter, has made a resolution and that we are apparently showing signs of not accepting it. May I remind Mr. Carrie that that is not the true position. I am glad the Chairman has already indicated the attitude of the majority of the members. I wish to say it has never been my attitude that we refuse to listen to schemes prepared by the Urban Council to improve anything. All we want to know is in what way the new system of employment of coolies by Government would benefit the public and to what extent would it justify the expenditure of nearly half a million dollars. Surely the nightsoil problem is divisible into three phases. The first is collection of nightsoil; the second is the removal from the tenements and carriage to Sanitary Department junks along the waterfront; and finally, the ultimate disposal of nightsoil for use as fertilisers, or dumping it into the sea, etc. The whole of our talk is concentrated on the second one, the removal of nightsoil from the house to the boats. Speaking as a layman, I should have thought that this is the least important of the three from the view of public health. Speaking for myself, I cannot understand why the Urban Council should have to confess to failure to carry out the law, which says that nightsoil has to be removed by the tenant or landlord and that it must not be dumped. I don't see why the Urban Council should not enforce that law. In any case, however much I may be accused as a party traditionally or financially interested—in the words of Dr. Macleod—I don't see why you should not receive the representation of the much maligned Luen Yip Kung

Wui Association and try to see if you cannot make something out of them. It has sent many petitions and is willing to do anything Government wants and introduce at once any kind of system of removal. Why cannot the Urban Council then insist that nightsoil coolies be licensed and photographed if you like, and that they must be supervised? It seems to me that if the same coolies are employed by Government there will be the very tempting prospect of pensions and all kinds of Government attractions, as mentioned by the Hon. Director of Medical Services, but they will still be working as Government servants with no incentive as capitalists. Further, they would still require inspectors and overseers, and truly I cannot see very much difference on the question of actual removal from the house to the boat between coolies employed by the Sanitary Department and those employed by the Association itself. I do strongly object to any suggestion that this should be a charge on the rates.

It seems to me that the Finance Committee is merely concerned with the question from this point of view: In view of the commitments to which Government is already committed for defence, the big sums which have been spent, the fact that a Committee is actively sitting to consider how far the Income Tax Ordinance can be amended and in what other ways further taxes could be raised, and the very serious deficit confronting the Colony, is it justified in committing the Colony to an annual expenditure of \$400,000? I would very much like to hear what the Hon. Acting Financial Secretary has to say on the financial question and also on the scheme generally because he has had the distinction of having been Chairman of the Urban Council.

HON. MR. TAM. —The Chairman and other members of the Urban Council seem to point to me as an ignoramus. I have tried to seek enlightenment but if that is all they have to give I am afraid I am not convinced. I want the public to be quite clear as to what they are getting for the \$400,000 which we are being asked to spend. We have spent money for other purposes which we were convinced were laudable, and I can see no reason why we should not also spend this sum if the scheme can be shown to be a laudable one. But what are we getting? We are getting 2,000 coolies employed by the Urban Council and nothing else. We are not getting the two-bucket system, hermetically sealed buckets or improved transport. If the public is satisfied we do not mind. We are their trustees. But I think that if the public realised what they are in for they will be equally against this scheme as I am myself. Are the members of the Urban Council really so satisfied? It appears to me that the Select Committee were about to report otherwise, favouring the granting of a contract or monopoly for the removal of nightsoil, when Mr. Carrie wrote a minute on October 3rd for a meeting on October 8th but the meeting was held in camera, because it suited the Urban Council. At another meeting, last Wednesday, Dr. Macleod thought the matter so urgent that a motion was pushed through by a majority and in public. All these tactics, arguments, defences and a statement in

the Press fall to impress me. It is only the question of merits that will impress me. Coming to the point which has been raised, it has been said that we will get better control of the coolies departmentally but I say you will not get control that way. It is only by supervision that you can control labour. Without supervision the employment of 2,000 coolies is of no use. You must have supervision; but I go further and say that with adequate supervision it is not necessary to employ these coolies. It has been alleged that the coolies do not work so well for people working for profit or rather that if they work for Government, which works for an ideal, they will do the work better. I doubt if we have got to that standard yet. I think most people work for profit, and the profit offered to the coolies by the Director of Medical Services is better rates of pay, compensation, medical benefits, etc. That is the profit the Director of Medical Services is dangling before their eyes. It does not mean that because a person works for profit that he is necessarily bound to charge a higher rate for what he does. It is conceivable that a public utility company can work and charge a low rate and give the same standard as Government which probably works for no return and with no profit in sight. Cholera, Dysentery and other diseases have been mentioned in support of the scheme. That again is part of the tactics. Can the Director of Medical Services say that the adoption of the system will rid Hong Kong of these diseases?

THE CHAIRMAN. —I think he says it will contribute to reducing such diseases.

HON. MR. TAM. —It may be a contributing factor but I doubt if you can use that as an argument for introducing the system. I want to stress that we are not justified in spending \$400,000 for a scheme of this nature. I think it is sheer waste of public money.

HON. MR. LI. —In view of the fact that I am a member of the Urban Council I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to make my position clear. When the proposed scheme for departmental collection of nightsoil was brought up before the Urban Council for consideration there was then another proposal put forward by the Select Committee of that Council, which will give a 10 years' franchise to a company to be formed for the purpose of collecting nightsoil from private houses. There was no choice between these two proposals and I had no hesitation in supporting the resolution urging Government to organise a department collection. The complete scheme of this departmental collection aims at the eventual abolition of the existing unhealthy method of removing this offensive article and the substitution of a more hygienic one such as motor transport, etc. I say to-day that this scheme of departmental collection, if it can be carried out by Government in full detail without delay, will be a great improvement. But as we are now facing difficulties in obtaining the necessary materials and equipment to complete the full scheme, I feel rather doubtful as to advisability of making a start in this scheme by just

employing a number of coolies by Government. It is a half-way measure which will not solve the problem and may cause inconvenience to the public. The word "Lo-Shu-Wong" meaning disinfectant coolie employed by the Sanitary Department, has been dreaded by Chinese householders. I am very much afraid that these nightsoil coolies, if under Government employment, will fall into this category. In fairness to the Hon. Mr. Tam, I wish to point out that the Urban Council has not been given an opportunity to consider the alternative method suggested by him in the treatment of the existing system.

HON. MR. DODWELL. —I would like to ask the Director of Medical Services whether he can give us any idea of how many coolies will be turned out of their jobs by this change. Will it not antagonise quite a number of people in this unsavoury business and also their employers who are said to be making much money out of it? Is this the proper moment to start this new scheme?

THE CHAIRMAN. —That has been one of my chief fears. When you upset a long-established system there is sure to be trouble.

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —One of my very and experiences when I come to Hong Kong three years ago was to visit the public mortuaries and to see not one or two or ten bodies lying on the slabs but heaps of bodies three feet high, mostly children, unfortunately, who had died of Small-pox. One of my first recommendations to Government was that we should introduce compulsory vaccination. Many people shook their heads, saying that this was quite contrary to tradition and Chinese custom. I submit that the present state of affairs, so far as diseases are concerned, demands similar action without delay.

THE CHAIRMAN. —I don't think there was serious opposition to vaccination. My 30 years' experience of Hong Kong is that the Chinese are most keen on it

HON. MR. LO. —I don't think there has been any opposition to Small-pox vaccination.

THE CHAIRMAN. —In any event that is outside the issue.

HON. MR. PATERSON. —None of us is trying to encourage Small-pox or endemic diseases. It is a matter of method and we are not convinced the method is the right one. That is the only thing. If there is dislocation it will do more harm than good. It is a case of swopping horses in mid-stream and that is what seared me.

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —The reason I mentioned this point was because Mr. Dodwell has suggested that there might be antagonism. There was antagonism to the introduction of compulsory vaccination and there was also antagonism to the powers we were proposing to take against the importation of Small-pox

cases from Canton. You may remember, Sir, that you informed me at that time that Government was prepared to take such steps if I was able to get support from Canton. I made a special trip to Canton and came back with the signatures of the authorities there. This was done because Government expected and knew there would be opposition to these measures. There will be opposition from the vested interests and from the employers of labour whom Mr. Carrie has described. But this is a far more serious position. We are faced with what may be a very serious situation indeed, and I most earnestly appeal to members to accept the advice of their advisers on health matters.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —The latest figures given by the Luen Yip Kung Wui is that they employ 8,000 coolies at \$30 a month which is simply ludicrous. Previously the figure given was 2,000. If the scheme is approved I expect I shall require some 1,800 coolies.

HON. MR. LO. —Therefore, if 3,000 is correct there will be 1,200 out of employ.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —3,000 is not correct.

HON. MR. LO. —How can you say that? I myself doubt the \$30 a month.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —I have made investigations. I don't think 3,000 coolies can make a living wage out of it. If the one per cent in the rates is the stumbling block, so far as I am concerned I have no objection to making the people who are paying to-day, continue paying for it. Under my scheme the persons who obey the law to-day will have to pay less in future.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —Cannot that be fixed by a by-law by the Urban Council?

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —That can be fixed but I presume the Treasury will have to make some surcharge on the rates to be collected from the landlords.

THE CHAIRMAN. —Why?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —The Urban Council can fix the rates of pay to be paid direct by the tenant to the coolie or the coolie's employer.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —No, the coolies must be paid by the Government. Otherwise I would have no control over the coolies.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —If we can fix the price of firewood why not this?

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —If the one per cent. is a stumbling block to this important scheme, by all means consider other steps.

HON. MR. PATERSON. —I think the financial side is only secondary. The only thing is this: Is the new scheme going to give us better service?

HON. MR. SHIELDS. —That is how I feel. The present system has been allowed to go on until it is now, we are told, in a perfect state of chaos and a danger to the community. What I can't understand is that if it is really a serious menace to the health of the Colony nothing was done to enforce the law providing supervision. Supervision is an admitted necessity even for Government servants and Government coolies. Now this question of nightsoil removal has come to such a point that we are told it is a serious menace to public health and the only solution is to sack a lot of coolies and spend a large sum of money on a scheme about which we are still not satisfied.

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —Within a short time of coming to this Colony it was my duty to prepare and write a report on the medical services for 1937. It was my duty to report on the situation as I found it and if you turn to page 20 of that report on the question of sewage disposal you will see my report as follows: “Since the decline in the industry (fertilisation of the mulberry trees in Canton) and particularly since the Sino-Japanese hostilities made coastal shipping rather a precarious trade, there has been a tendency for the contractors . . . . to dispose of nightsoil to market gardeners and for fish ponds in the New Territories. This obviously constitutes a grave source of danger when it is remembered that Typhoid and Dysentery are common in Hong Kong and that outbreaks of Cholera are also not of infrequent occurrence. . . . For this reason steps are being taken to investigate the possibility of drastically altering the system and to arrange for nightsoil to be dumped at stated places. . . .” As regards the other point as to why action was not taken against those coolies, we have the Financial Secretary here who can tell you that, when he was Chairman of the Urban Council, he did his best to get these coolies—sometimes posting special guards—and though a certain number were caught that was not the solution. I would like to assure Mr. Shields and all members that this point has been gone into very carefully, and I entirely agree with Mr. Carrie that nothing less but complete reorganisation of the system will meet the case.

HON. MR. PATERSON. —Yet even so your argument is that one should make an existing coolie a government coolie and he will then do his work better. I am not at all convinced of that.

HON. MR. LO. —If supervision is impossible then I agree with the Director of Medical Services. That is my only point, and since the Honourable Director of Medical Services has mentioned the name of Mr. Todd, I think he should be allowed to tell us what he knows.

THE CHAIRMAN. —I think it is rather irregular for a past Chairman of the Urban Council to speak in the presence of the present Chairman unless Mr. Carrie agrees to it.

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —I think it is quite irregular to ask for Mr. Todd's opinion on a matter which has been dealt with by the present Chairman of the Urban Council and supported by everyone behind him. I have great admiration for Mr. Todd but I think it is an insult—I cannot find any other suitable word or something along those lines—to have the Chairman of the Urban Council here and ask the previous Chairman to speak.

HON. MR. LO. —I do demand the right to make myself understood. This is the Finance Committee meeting to which we have invited the Director of Medical Services and the Chairman of the Urban Council to make statements. I don't resent the Director of Medical Services taking an active part in the debate, but I do object to his remarks of insult or indignity if Mr. Todd were to speak as past Chairman of the Urban Council. He has mentioned that Mr. Todd had tried a method of supervision and failed and yet he does not want to allow him to speak.

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —I am willing to give Mr. Lo that point.

HON. MR. LO. —I am very glad, otherwise I don't think it is fair. I do persist very strongly.

THE CHAIRMAN. —It is merely a question of procedure.

HON. MR. TAM. —Mr. Todd is a member of the Finance Committee whereas the Director of Medical Services and the Chairman of the Urban Council are not.

HON. MR. D'ALMADA. —In any event I think any member who has had experience in these matters should give us the benefit of it. I would like to know whether, since the Urban Council is seriously considering recommending that Government should take over this job, if any attempt has been made to consider the suggestions made by this Guild. I remember seeing a petition of the Guild offering to use motor vehicles for transport and giving an indication of the extent of their profits, a certain amount of which they are willing to contribute to charity every month. That suggests to me that it is a very profitable business indeed and can be properly run by private enterprise. In these circumstances, has the Urban Council or the Select Committee ever considered the possibility of continuing with the present system and at the same time employing safeguards?

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —The Urban council at one time favoured employment of one monopoly contractor. That would be better than a multitude of sub-contractors but I do not consider that this work should be done by a contractor.

HON. MR. D'ALMADA. —The general view regarding Government departments is that the profits are swallowed immediately they are made. Have you ever considered the possibility of strict terms being imposed on those people now that they have made a *bona fide* offer? I do not share the faith of the Director of Medical Services and Mr. Carrie in Government-run businesses. I feel that of late Government departments have fallen down on various jobs and were criticised in the Budget debate for this. I hesitate to lend my support to still another Government department which might come in for similar criticism next year. If the alternative of stringent regulations can be tried for the time being I think it should be tried.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —May I remind Mr. D'Almada that it was not very long ago that scavenging was done by contract and was very unsatisfactorily done until it was taken over by Government?

HON. MR. DODWELL. —I doubt if even now scavenging is done any better by Government judging by the condition of some of the streets.

HON. MR. LO. —Once a nightsoil coolie becomes a Government servant he is absolutely a tin-god.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —Mr. Butters agreed, I know, to the inclusion of \$400,000 on the expenditure side of the Budget only on condition that there was revenue to compensate for it. He suggested imposing an additional one per cent. on the rates and therefore it is only on that condition that I can support the expenditure. Speaking as a past Chairman of the Urban Council, I was always of the opinion, and still am, that in the first instance we should try to enforce daily removal as laid down in the by-law. Secondly, that the Urban Council should fix the amount to be paid by the tenant for daily removal from each floor. Thirdly, that coolies should be supervised by foremen specifically engaged for that purpose by the Sanitary Department. I also do not support the allegation that a considerable amount of nightsoil is put in the drains. It is true to a certain extent but only to a small extent and I am sure it is very much exaggerated.

HON. MR. PEARCE. —I don't think Mr. Carrie has directly answered Mr. D'Almada's question as to whether or not the Guild's proposal to improve their system has been considered. Has it been considered?

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN COUNCIL. —No, it has not been considered.

HON. MR. SHIELDS. —You referred to this question of one per cent. on the rates. If this Department gets into full swing and the cost comes to \$800,000 would you then want another one per cent.? We have got to face it.

HON. MR. LO. —Mr. Todd, in view of your past experience as Chairman of the Urban Council, do you think an effort to supervise in the way you mean is absolutely doomed to failure? What are the prospects of its succeeding?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —There are certain prospects of it succeeding.

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —In the report made by the Inspector in charge of the clearance of nightsoil, the normal deliveries of nightsoil to the barges comes to 3,798 buckets every night. On the first night of the recent black-out the total received was 172 and on the second the number was 1,776. One explanation of that is that they did not clear them or that they dumped them.

THE CHAIRMAN. —It is a very mysterious trade!

HON. MR. D'ALMADA. —Here is a Guild—I am not speaking on behalf of it—which has offered certain things. It has made a minimum offer, with a view to bargaining with Government if you like. Nevertheless, they have given an indication of their keenness to retain the business and surely some means could be devised for them to carry on the present system without increase in rates. The Guild is prepared to give \$8,000 a month to Charity. This gives some idea of how far they are willing or able to go to satisfy Government requirements.

THE CHAIRMAN. —I think it is better that we should have a decision by circulation either to-morrow or next day.

HON. MR. PATERSON. —Quite frankly, I do not see why you cannot impose a rigid form of supervision on the present organisation.

THE CHAIRMAN. —The question before us is whether the \$400,000 is to be expended or not. Does any one now propose that this should be made payable on April 1?

HON. MR. SHIELDS. —I cannot understand why it must be on April 1.

THE CHAIRMAN. —It is the beginning of the financial year.

HON. MR. SHIELDS. —We are discussing the merits of the proposal.

THE CHAIRMAN. —We cannot go on discussing forever and ever surely.

HON. MR. LO. —Speaking for myself I am quite prepared to vote now; but I think that in view of the observations of the Director of Medical Services and Mr. Carrie one would like to feel that one has considered the matter from every angle before doing something which is not in accordance with their advice. Therefore I think circulating members is best. I do appeal to them to forget any bitterness which might have arisen over this controversy and reconsider the question of supervision.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. —Another point is that the Treasury is worrying me as to whether or not a start is to be made and whether there is to be an increase in the rates.

THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES. —On that subject I am entirely in the hands of the Financial Secretary. I think it would be simple to ask the Treasurer to add the cost of removal at the rate of \$1 per bucket per month to the quarterly bills which go out to the landlords. As far as I am concerned, all I want is that the scheme be put into force with the minimum of delay.

Decision was deferred.