

OFFICIAL REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**Meeting of 31st January 1962**

PRESENT:

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR (*PRESIDENT*)
SIR ROBERT BROWN BLACK, GCMG, OBE
THE HONOURABLE CLAUDE BRAMALL. BURGESS, CMG, OBE
COLONIAL SECRETARY
THE HONOURABLE MAURICE HEENAN
ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL
THE HONOURABLE PATRICK CARDINALL MASON SEDGWICK
ACTING SECRETARY FOR CHINESE AFFAIRS
THE HONOURABLE JOHN JAMES COWPERTHWAIT, OBE
FINANCIAL SECRETARY
THE HONOURABLE ALLAN INGLIS
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
DR THE HONOURABLE DAVID JAMES MASTERTON MacKENZIE, CMG. OBE
DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
THE HONOURABLE KENNETH STRATHMORE KINGHORN
DIRECTOR OF URBAN SERVICES
THE HONOURABLE PETER DONOHUE
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
THE HONOURABLE KWOK CHAN, OBE
THE HONOURABLE HUGH DAVID MacEWEN BARTON, MBE
THE HONOURABLE DHUN JEHANGIR RUTTONJEE, OBE
THE HONOURABLE FUNG PING-FAN, OBE
THE HONOURABLE RICHARD CHARLES LEE, OBE
THE HONOURABLE KWAN CHO-YIU, OBE
THE HONOURABLE KAN YUET-KEUNG, OBE
THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM CHAKLES GODDARD KNOWLES
MR ANDREW McDONALD CHAPMAN (*Deputy Clerk of Council*)

ABSENT:

HIS EXCELLENCY LIEUTENANT-GENERAL REGINALD HACKETT HEWETSON, CB,
CBE, DSO
COMMANDER BRITISH FORCES

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17th January, 1962 were confirmed.

PAPERS

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by Command of His Excellency the Governor, laid upon the table the following papers: —

<i>Subject</i>	<i>GN No</i>
Sessional Paper, 1962: —	
No. 7—Annual Report by the Commissioner of Police for the year 1960-61.	
Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 1953.	
Report made in accordance with Section 115(1).	
Mental Health Ordinance, 1960.	
Mental Health Regulations, 1962	A 3
Public Health and Urban Services Ordinance, 1960.	
Public Health and Urban Services (Amendment of Fourth Schedule) Order, 1962	A 4
Registration of Persons Ordinance, 1960.	
Registration of Persons (Re-registration) (No. 2) Order, 1962	A 6
Protection of Non-Government Certificates of Origin Ordinance, 1960.	
Protection of Non-Government Certificates of Origin Ordinance, 1960 (Amendment of Schedule) Order, 1962	A 8
Mental Health Ordinance, 1960.	
Declaration of Mental Hospital Order, 1962	A 9

QUESTIONS

MR KWOK CHAN, pursuant to notice, asked the following question: —

Further to the Government's reply to my question regarding abattoirs at the last meeting of this Council, in which all the unofficial members of the Executive and Legislative Councils took an interest, I have been asked further by them to ask Government whether it is prepared to give an assurance that construction of the project would be started within six months so that the existing antiquated slaughter house may be replaced as soon as possible and that further increases in cost due to delays could be avoided.

MR K. S. KINGHORN replied as follows: —

Your Excellency, as stated in my reply to the Honourable Member's question on 17th January it would take about 18 months for the Consultants to prepare working drawings and contract documents. Construction could not, therefore, commence until then though piling would be undertaken a few months earlier.

The major increases in cost have been due to the acceptance by the Abattoirs Progress Sub-Committee of Finance Committee of the Urban Council's proposal that the previous single abattoir scheme should be abandoned in favour of one new abattoir on each side of the harbour, in order to suit the local trade. When the sketch plans for these were completed, it became necessary to increase the size of the lairages to such an extent as to necessitate major re-planning. More recently, as I said in my previous reply, it has been necessary for Government to scrutinise the latest proposals in more detail, in order to satisfy itself that the very high costs are justified. If no further major changes are made, there is no reason to suppose that further delays will occur.

HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1962

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the First reading of a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Housing Ordinance, 1954."

He said: Sir, the main purpose of this Bill, as the Objects and Reasons indicate, is to empower Your Excellency to direct the Housing Authority to manage certain estates which are not vested in them, and Honourable Members will clearly wish me to give some explanation of the circumstances which make this amendment necessary.

Among those recommendations in the Final Report of the Special Committee on Housing which Government accepted towards the end of 1959 was the proposal that we should take further steps to provide housing at very low rentals for people in the lower income groups. A public announcement at the time stated that the most urgent requirement was for those families earning less than \$300 a month, and it disclosed that it was Government's intention that the Public Works Department should be responsible for the planning and construction of this type of housing and that the administration and overall responsibility for the estates would be vested in the Resettlement Department.

Though the initial selection of suitable sites has proved far more difficult than we anticipated, planning and construction work is now in hand on five estates at Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin, Shek Kip Mei,

Valley Road (Hung Hom) and Cheung Sha Wan, and my honourable Friend the Director of Public Works is presently examining the suitability of a number of other sites, both in the outskirts of Kowloon and on the Island. The first estate, which will be ready for occupation this summer, is at Kwun Tong and is designed to provide housing for 5,750 people. Altogether the five estates I have mentioned will provide housing for about 10,000 families (or approximately 45,000 people) by the spring of 1964. It is anticipated that further estates will be built so that about 5,000 families (or approximately 22,500 persons) can be rehoused annually from 1964 onwards. I might at this stage make the point that this new housing programme is of course, additional to Government's resettlement programme whereby over 70,000 persons have been resettled in the past year bringing the total population now in our resettlement estates and areas to about 435,000 persons.

It has proved necessary, however, to reconsider the earlier decision that the responsibility for filling and managing the new housing estates, to which I have just referred, should lie with the Resettlement Department. That Department has certainly acquired considerable experience in managing estates like these, but in the field of tenant selection the work of the Resettlement Department is very different. The tenants of the Resettlement Estates, as it were, select themselves by reason of their occupation as squatters of land required for development, and on closer examination it appeared to us that the Department did not possess at present either the experience or the staff or the machinery for the difficult task of selecting, in the early stages at least, a comparatively small number of tenants from the very large number of applications which are likely to be received. The Housing Authority, on the other hand, has, over the past 7 years, gained considerable experience both in the management of property and in the problems of tenant selection. It, therefore, appeared to be more economical and more appropriate to invite the Authority to act as Government's agents in the tenancing, managing and general administration of this new form of public housing. The members of the Authority were consulted, and agreed, and I am glad to be able to record their readiness and willingness to take on this new work. Although the scale of rents to be charged for this accommodation has not been finally fixed, it is intended that they will include a margin to cover the Authority's management and maintenance expenses and that the balance of the revenue from rents will accrue to the general revenue of the Colony.

Government has also further considered the need, as announced in October 1959, to limit the eligibility for low cost housing to families earning less than \$300 a month and has decided that the limit should be raised to \$400. In arriving at this decision we took into consideration the policy of other organizations engaged in the provision of housing at low rentals, and in particular that of the Housing Authority, which is

now providing for those in the income group from \$400 a month upwards and has a programme in hand to build more self-contained flats mainly for those in the \$400 to \$600 income group.

There is one further matter that I should mention here in connexion with the provision of this new form of low-cost housing. In the Budget Debate in 1958 Honourable Members raised the question of the housing of Government's junior married staff, who are not eligible to participate in local Government Officers' Co-operative Housing Schemes. These are, in effect Class V officers who are non-pensionable and whose salaries are generally below \$400 a month; there are 23,300 such officers and of these 8,600 have ten years' service or more. In my reply to Honourable Members at the time, I stated that Government accepted the contention that, as a good employer, it should give special consideration to providing better housing for its junior staff and that, as an initial step in this direction, we were negotiating with the Hong Kong Housing Society for the allocation of 1,000 flats in the Society's projected estate at Shau Kei Wan. Since then, arrangements have been made for Government to be allocated a number of flats in the Society's estate at Aberdeen and for the number allocated in the Shau Kei Wan Estate to be reduced accordingly. The first 500 flats in Shau Kei Wan and Aberdeen will be ready this summer. The Society's rents, including rates, will range from \$57 a month for a self-contained unit for 5 persons to \$119 a month for a unit for 9 persons, and it is of interest to note that, in response to a recent circular to Class V officers, no less than 1,245 officers who work on the Island have applied for the 500 flats which will become available this year. Nevertheless it must be accepted, I think, that the scale of rents now proposed for these flats is substantially higher than we envisaged when I referred to this proposal in 1958, and there must remain a possibility that many of the junior officers, to the solution of whose housing difficulties Government is committed to giving some assistance, may in the end be unable to afford these rents. To meet this difficulty, it has been decided, with the agreement of the Housing Authority, to allocate not more than 15% of all domestic accommodation in its low cost housing estates for the housing of Class V officers, provided, of course, that in all other respects they meet the Housing Authority's conditions for selection.

Sir, this is a brief Bill, but the objects underlying it are of some importance. The construction and management of these new buildings, which are of a type somewhere between resettlement blocks and the accommodation provided by the Housing Authority, takes us a further step forward in a long and expensive programme designed to improve the housing conditions of the population.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL seconded.

The question was put and agreed to.

The Bill was read a First time.

Objects and Reasons

The "Objects and Reasons" for the Bill were stated as follows: —

The purpose of this Bill is to seek the amendment of the Housing Ordinance, 1954, in such manner as to confer upon the Hong Kong Housing Authority the necessary powers to manage housing estates in addition to the existing power to construct them.

2. The form of the proposed section 4, which will replace the existing sections 4 and 5 and part of section 11 of the Ordinance, is adapted from section 13 and the First Schedule of the Housing Act (Northern Ireland), 1945, which is an Act which established the Northern Ireland Housing Trust for the performance of very similar functions to those for which the Hong Kong Housing Authority was established.

3. The proposed new section 5 will authorize the Governor to vest in the Hong Kong Housing Authority the control and management of property vested in the Crown.

4. Clause 4 of the Bill is consequential upon the introduction by clause 2 of the new section 4 to the Ordinance referred to above.

ADJOURNMENT

HE THE GOVERNOR: —Well, gentlemen, that concludes the business for today. When is it your pleasure that we should meet again?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: —May I suggest this day two weeks, Sir?

HE THE GOVERNOR: —Council stands adjourned until this day two weeks.