

OFFICIAL REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**Sitting of 5th February 1969**

Mr PRESIDENT in the Chair

PRESENT

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR (*PRESIDENT*)
SIR DAVID (CLIVE CROSBIE) TRENCH, GCMG, MC
THE HONOURABLE THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (*Acting*)
MR GEOFFREY CADZOW HAMILTON, CBE
THE HONOURABLE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
MR DENYS TUDOR EMIL ROBERTS, OBE, QC
THE HONOURABLE THE SECRETARY FOR CHINESE AFFAIRS
MR DAVID RONALD HOLMES, CBE, MC, ED
THE HONOURABLE THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY
SIR JOHN (JAMES) COWPERTHWAITTE, KBE, CMG
DR THE HONOURABLE TENG PIN-HUI, CMG, OBE
DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
THE HONOURABLE ALEC MICHAEL JOHN WRIGHT, CMG
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM DAVID GREGG, CBE
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
THE HONOURABLE ROBERT MARSHALL HETHERINGTON, DFC
COMMISSIONER OF LABOUR
THE HONOURABLE KENNETH STRATHMORE KINGHORN, CBE
DISTRICT COMMISSIONER, NEW TERRITORIES
THE HONOURABLE DAVID RICHARD WATSON ALEXANDER, MBE
DIRECTOR OF URBAN SERVICES
THE HONOURABLE GEORGE TIPPETT ROWE
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE
THE HONOURABLE KAN YUET-KEUNG, CBE
THE HONOURABLE TSE YU-CHUEN, OBE
THE HONOURABLE KENNETH ALBERT WATSON, OBE
THE HONOURABLE WOO PAK-CHUEN, OBE
THE HONOURABLE SZETO WAI, OBE
THE HONOURABLE WILFRED WONG SIEN-BING, OBE
THE HONOURABLE ELLEN LI SHU-PUI, OBE
THE HONOURABLE WILSON WANG TZE-SAM
THE HONOURABLE HERBERT JOHN CHARLES BROWNE
DR THE HONOURABLE CHUNG SZE-YUEN, OBE
THE HONOURABLE LEE QUO-WEI

ABSENT

THE HONOURABLE TERENCE DARE SORBY
DIRECTOR OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
THE HONOURABLE FUNG HON-CHU, OBE
THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL ALEXANDER ROBERT HERRIES, OBE, MC

IN ATTENDANCE

THE DEPUTY CLERK OF COUNCILS
MR DONALD BARTON

PAPERS

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: —By Command of Your Excellency, I lay upon the table the Annual Report by the Registrar General.

Subject

Sessional Paper 1969: —

No 4—Annual Report by the Registrar General for the year 1967-68.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: —Sir, I lay upon the table five items of subsidiary legislation which have been published in the *Government Gazette* since the last sitting of this Council.

*Subject**LN No*

Subsidiary Legislation: —

Colonial Air Navigation Orders 1961 to 1968.

Hong Kong Air Navigation (General) (Amendment)

Regulations 1969 11

Colonial Air Navigation Orders 1961 to 1968.

Authorization by the Governor 12

Cremation Ordinance.

Cremation and Gardens of Remembrance (Amendment)

Regulations 1969 13

Fugitive Offenders Act 1967.

Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 (Commencement) Order

1969 14

Fugitive Offenders Act 1967.

Fugitive Offenders (United Kingdom Dependencies)

Order 1969 15

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY: —Sir, by Command of Your Excellency, I lay upon the table the papers listed under my name in the Order Paper.

Subject

Sessional Paper 1969: —

No 3—Annual Report by the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries for the year 1967-68 which includes: —

The Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Loan Fund Report 1967-68.

Report on the Administration of the J. E. Joseph Trust Fund 1967-68.

Report: —

Annual Report of the Hong Kong Productivity Council for the year 1967-68.

QUESTIONS

Social Services Branch functions

1. MR P. C. WOO asked the following question: —

What is the exact function of the Social Services Branch of the Colonial Secretariat recently established by Government and what is its relationship with the other Social Services Departments such as the Medical, Education, Labour and Social Welfare?

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY: —Sir, Members will be aware that the Colonial Secretariat is divided into several different branches: the Establishment, Finance, Economic, Defence, Lands, Councils, Social Services and General Branches. Until recently the business of those departments concerned with social services was handled in the Secretariat by the General Branch. This branch gradually became overloaded and was unable to give as much attention as was desirable to these important matters.

It was therefore decided to create the Social Services Branch with primary responsibility for processing in the Secretariat the business of the Education, Medical and Health, Labour, Social Welfare, Trade Unions and Prisons Departments. It is also responsible for dealing, at Secretariat level, with subjects such as narcotics, recreation and industrial and vocational training which fall within the responsibility of more than one department.

The function of the Social Services Branch, like other Branches, is to assist departments in the formulation and execution of policies, to seek and convey decisions from appropriate authorities, and to coordinate Government's activities in their own particular fields.

The formation of the new Branch will not in any way alter the present responsibilities of the heads of the various departments concerned. These directors will continue to be fully responsible for the activities of their departments, including forward planning and the execution of policy. They will however be assisted by the new Social Services Branch to a much greater extent than has hitherto been possible.

MR P. C. WOO: —Sir, will this new branch pay special attention to the problem of youth?

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY: —Yes, Sir. In so far as the problems of youth are dealt with by the various departments which I have listed then these responsibilities would also fall to be undertaken by the Social Services Branch.

Questions

Long-term loans to small industries

2. DR S. Y. CHUNG asked the following question: —

Will Government inform this Council what progress has been made in providing long-term loans to small-scale industries for the modernization of their plants?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY: —Sir, I presume that my honourable Friend's question refers to the study promised in last year's Budget debate by the Honourable Director of Commerce and Industry, in response to a suggestion by my honourable Friend, a study of the possibility of setting up a loan institution to assist small-scale industry*.

I should first perhaps clear up two erroneous implications which appear to arise from the question as it is phrased. First, it appears to be implied that there has been a decision to set up such an official institution of this kind; that is not so. Secondly, the question refers to long-term loans but the promised study referred to medium-term loans.

I understand that the Director of Commerce and Industry set up a committee of the Trade and Industry Advisory Board last year to conduct the promised study and the committee took the very proper view that it was essential, as a first step, to secure factual information about the present situation before reaching any conclusion on the question before it. On the committee's suggestion, therefore, a survey has been made of the capital structure of a sample of industrial establishments employing under 100 persons. The report of this survey has been completed recently and the committee is now studying it.

DR S. Y. CHUNG: —Sir, may I ask a supplementary question please? Will my honourable Friend inform this Council when he expects to have a report on this matter?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY: —I am sorry I have no indication of when this committee may report.

STATEMENT

Cremation and Gardens of Remembrance (Amendment) Regulations 1969

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: —Sir, among the five items of subsidiary legislation laid on the table today⁺ are the Cremation and Gardens of Remembrance (Amendment) Regulations 1969, which are concerned with the deposit of ashes in Government crematoria.

* 1968 Hansard, page 161.

⁺ Page 44.

The previous regulations empowered the officer in charge of a crematorium to accept for custody only the ashes of persons cremated in a Government crematorium.

The amending regulations will entitle a person to deposit in a Government crematorium, permanently or for a period agreed with the Director of Urban Services, the ashes of two classes of deceased persons, firstly, those who were resident in Hong Kong at death and who were cremated in a Government crematorium within three months of death, and secondly, those who were residents of Hong Kong for at least ten of the twenty years preceding death, even if cremated outside Hong Kong.

The ashes of other persons cremated outside Hong Kong who were residents of Hong Kong for less than 10 years of the 20 before death may be so deposited at the discretion of the Urban Council.

HONG KONG EXPORT CREDIT INSURANCE CORPORATION ORDINANCE

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY moved the following resolution: —

Resolved, in exercise of the power conferred by section 23 of the Hong Kong Export Credit Insurance Corporation Ordinance, that the contingent liability of the Hong Kong Export Credit Insurance Corporation under contracts of insurance shall not at any time exceed the sum of seven hundred and fifty million dollars.

He said: —Sir, it is evidence of the success of the Export Credit Insurance Corporation that this is the second time since the Corporation was set up just over two years ago* that I have had to propose to this Council an increase in the maximum contingent liability which the Corporation may undertake. The original limit was \$300 million; this was increased to \$500 million in August 1967⁺ and I am now proposing a further increase to \$750 million.

The actual contingent liability assumed at present is about \$450 million.

There are a number of reasons for this rapid growth. One is the success of the Corporation in attracting new business (and the fact, perhaps, that it has now paid some substantial claims); another is the recent rapid growth of our export trade which is naturally reflected in the Corporation's business. A more technical reason is a movement

* 1966 Hansard, pages 436-9 & 452-3.

⁺ 1967 Hansard, pages 381-2.

[THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY] **Hong Kong Export Credit Insurance Corporation Ordinance**

in export finance away from Letters of Credit to D/A and D/P bills, a movement (and this is my only qualm about the Corporation's success) a movement which may owe something to the availability of credit insurance itself. A recent influence has been the import prior deposit scheme in Britain, some of which has been financed by longer credit terms rather than by direct deposits from Hong Kong.

One point I should perhaps make in case the magnitude of the sums now involved gives rise to concern. The law places a limit on the contingent liability which the Corporation may assume and this contingent liability is the total of the maximum amounts which the Corporation contracts to cover for each client during a year, divided by half (because credits usually do not extend beyond six months)—plus any specific contracts. But this is a maximum potential figure never likely to be actually at risk at one time. At present the actual amount at risk on shipments outstanding is only of the order of \$120 million.

I may add that the Corporation's claims experience remains excellent, which says much for the underwriting ability of the Commissioner and his staff, and I have no hesitation in putting this resolution to honourable Members.

Question put and agreed to.

DOLLAR AND SUBSIDIARY CURRENCY NOTES BILL 1969

Bill read the first time and ordered to be set down for second reading pursuant to Standing Order No 41(3).

DOLLAR AND SUBSIDIARY CURRENCY NOTES BILL 1969

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY moved the second reading of:—"A bill to provide for the demonetization of five cent, ten cent and one dollar currency notes and for the consolidation of the law in respect of the issue of limited legal tender currency notes."

He said:—Sir, Government first issued currency notes in 1935 when the Hong Kong dollar went off the silver standard and silver dollars were substituted by one dollar notes*. Then, because of war-time metal shortages, ten cent, five cent and one cent notes were issued from October 1941⁺. At its peak the circulation rose to 55 million dollar notes and \$5.3 million worth of other denominations. Except for a special issue in 1965 when we ran short of coins at Chinese New Year, we have not issued ten cent and five cent notes since 1949 and 1950

* 1935 Hansard, pages 249-52.

⁺ 1941 Hansard, pages 215-6.

respectively, when we issued new ten cent and five cent coins* ; and we have not issued one dollar notes since December 1960 when new dollar coins were first issued⁺. The only note Government is still issuing is the one cent note which still has its uses, although I have some doubts about how necessary these uses are.

Since the resumed issue of coins, we have been withdrawing notes from circulation with the co-operation of the banks, and to-day the theoretical circulation is down to \$11.5 million of one dollar notes and \$2.8 million of other notes. The rate of withdrawal has now dropped to a trickle.

It seems obvious therefore that the greater part of the remaining notes has been lost or destroyed or been scattered over the world and will never now return to circulation.

Under the Ordinances which regulate these note issues, their issue is backed by two Funds, one covering dollar notes and the other covering the subsidiary notes. But, as I have suggested, the money in these funds now probably covers for the most part non-existent notes which will never return to be presented for redemption or exchange. It seems to us, therefore, that the time has come to wind up these now unnecessary funds and release the money which backs them into general revenue where it can be spent.

In order to do this it is necessary, in the technical phrase, to "demonetize" them, that is, to provide that they are no longer legal tender and need no longer be accepted, as a matter of law, in payment for goods or services or in exchange. This is effected by the bill before Council for all one dollar and subsidiary notes other than one cent notes.

But, and this is an important point that I must stress, this does not mean that we are repudiating them or depriving them of their value. The bill provides that, if a note is presented to the Accountant General, he must pay to the person presenting it, from general revenue, the amount in legal tender equal to the face value of the notes presented. In other words, the currency notes will be, and will permanently remain, exchangeable at the Treasury for coins or banknotes to their face value.

For the convenience of the public, I expect that the banks will continue to co-operate with us, as they have done for a number of years, by receiving the notes from their clients and carrying out the exchange for them.

The bill contains the power to issue one cent notes and it also contains further provisions whereby the Financial Secretary may issue also, as legal tender, five cent and ten cent currency notes provided that the total of all notes issued does not exceed \$10 million. It is

* 1951 Hansard, page 55.

⁺ 1959 Hansard, page 34 and 1960 Hansard, pages 50-7.

[THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY] **Dollars and Subsidiary Currency Note Bill—
second reading**

desirable to have this reserve power in case we are ever again faced with the situation we faced in 1965 when ten cent and five cent coins ran short at Chinese New Year. But it is very unlikely that we shall ever have to use the power and as, even if used, it would be only on a very temporary basis, no provision is made for a special fund to cover their issue and redemption, which would be accounted for through general revenue.

Question proposed.

Motion made (pursuant to Standing Order No 30). That the debate on the second reading of the bill be adjourned—THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY.

Question put and agreed to.

Explanatory Memorandum

This bill has two objects—

- (a) to demonetize all five cent, ten cent and one dollar currency notes which are now in circulation (clause 2); and
- (b) to empower the Financial Secretary to make future issues of one cent, five cent and ten cent currency notes, subject to not more than ten million dollars worth of such notes being in circulation at any time (clause 4(1)).

2. It is not intended that the Financial Secretary should make any such issue in normal circumstances. The power would be reserved for use in the future if an unexpected shortage of coins arose.

3. One cent currency notes in circulation at present will remain legal tender by clause 4(2).

4. By clause 6, any notes demonetized by clause 2 may be surrendered to the Accountant General, who must redeem them for their face value in legal tender. It is intended to arrange for leading banks to act as agents for the Accountant General and to redeem demonetized notes surrendered to them.

5. Clause 7 provides for the demonetization of any future issues of notes made by the Financial Secretary under clause 4 and for the surrender of any currency notes so demonetized.

6. The assets of the Subsidiary Note Security Fund established under the Subsidiary Currency Notes Ordinance (Cap. 67)

and of the note security fund established under the Dollar Currency Notes Ordinance are transferred to the general revenue by clause 3. There will also be credited to and debited against the general revenue any moneys received from future issues of notes under clause 4 and the expenses of such issues.

7. The total amount of the face value of notes issued under clause 4 and are currently in circulation shall be published annually in the *Gazette* (clause 8).

MINING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1969

Committee stage

Council went into committee to consider the bill clause by clause.

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Council then resumed.

MR R. M. HETHERINGTON reported that the bill before Council had passed through committee without amendment.

Bill ordered to be set down for third reading pursuant to Standing Order No 47.

Third reading

MR R. M. HETHERINGTON moved the third reading of the bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the third time and passed.

FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1969

Committee stage

Council went into committee to consider the bill clause by clause.

Clauses 1 to 9 were agreed to.

Council then resumed.

MR R. M. HETHERINGTON reported that the bill before Council had passed through committee without amendment.

Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Amendment) Bill—committance stage

Bill ordered to be set down for third reading pursuant to Standing Order No 47.

Third reading

MR R. M. HETHERINGTON moved the third reading of the bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the third time and passed.

**THE DIOCESAN BOYS' SCHOOL COMMITTEE
INCORPORATION BILL 1969**

**THE COUNCIL OF THE DIOCESAN GIRLS' SCHOOL
INCORPORATION BILL 1969**

**THE DIOCESAN PREPARATORY SCHOOL COUNCIL
INCORPORATION BILL 1969**

Bill read the first time and ordered to be set down for second reading.

**THE DIOCESAN BOYS' SCHOOL COMMITTEE
INCORPORATION BILL 1969**

MR Y. K. KAN moved the second reading of:—"A bill to provide for the incorporation of The Diocesan Boys' School Committee."

He said:—Sir, this bill follows the usual form of a bill of incorporation and its purpose is clearly set out in the statement of explanatory memorandum to which there is nothing I can usefully add except perhaps to say that by a happy coincidence the School celebrates its centenary this year. As an old boy it is a privilege for me to move the present bill.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole Council pursuant to Standing Order No 43(1).

Explanatory Memorandum

The object of this bill is to incorporate The Diocesan Boys' School Committee.

2. The object of the School is to offer a sound general education conducted upon Christian principles as professed by the Church of England and now continued by the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui (Chinese Anglican Church).

3. It is the desire of the School Committee that the School's properties should be held in the name of the School Committee. Since the School Committee is not a corporate body and cannot, therefore, hold any property in its own name, it is thought desirable that it should become a corporate body, in order to enable it to own property in its own name and otherwise to carry out its aims and objects more effectively. Not being a corporate body it is also handicapped in other ways in the carrying out of its functions.

**THE COUNCIL OF THE DIOCESAN GIRLS' SCHOOL
INCORPORATION BILL 1969**

MR Y. K. KAN moved the second reading of:—"A bill to provide for the incorporation of The Council of the Diocesan Girls' School."

He said:—Sir, like the previous bill, this bill also follows the usual form of a bill of incorporation. The purpose of the bill is also clearly set out in the explanatory memorandum. Sir, whilst I cannot claim the same privilege as an old boy, by reason of my Wife's association, I can claim to be an old boy-in-law. (*Laughter*).

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole Council pursuant to Standing Order No 43(1).

Explanatory Memorandum

The object of this bill is to incorporate The Council of the Diocesan Girls' School.

2. The object of the School is to offer a sound general education conducted upon Christian principles as professed by the Church of England and now continued by the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui (Chinese Anglican Church).

**The Council of The Diocesan Girls' School Incorporation Bill—
second reading**

[Explanatory Memorandum]

3. It is the desire of the School Council that the School's properties should be hold in the name of the School Council. Since the School Council is not a corporate body and cannot, therefore, hold any property in its own name, it is thought desirable that it should become a corporate body, in order to enable it to own property in its own name and otherwise to carry out its aims and objects more effectively. Not being a corporate body it is also handicapped in other ways in the carrying out of its functions.

**THE DIOCESAN PREPARATORY SCHOOL COUNCIL
INCORPORATION BILL 1969**

MR Y. K. KAN moved the second reading of:—"A bill to provide for the incorporation of The Diocesan Preparatory School Council."

He said:—Sir, like the two previous bill this bill also follows the usual form of a bill of incorporation. The purpose of the bill is also set out in the explanatory memorandum and there is nothing I can usefully add.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole Council pursuant to Standing Order No 43(1).

Explanatory Memorandum

The object of this bill is to incorporate The Diocesan Preparatory School Council.

2. The object of the School is to offer a sound general education conducted upon Christian principles as professed by the Church of England and now continued by the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui (Chinese Anglican Church).

3. It is the desire of the School Council that the School's properties should be hold in the name of the School Council. Since the School Council is not a corporate body and cannot, therefore, hold any property in its own name, it is-thought desirable that it should become a corporate body, in order to enable it to own property in its own name and otherwise to carry out its aims and objects more effectively. Not being a corporate body it is also handicapped in other ways in the carrying out of its functions.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made, and question proposed. That this Council do now adjourn—
THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY.

2.46 p.m.

Translation and Interpretation

MR P. C. WOO: —Sir, in recent years it has been the declared policy of Government to bring itself closer to the people of Hong Kong in order to create better understanding and closer relationship and cooperation between Government and the people.

The establishment of the City District Officer scheme last year clearly demonstrates Government's endeavour to achieve such an aim and I have no doubt that the scheme will be successful and work well though it is too early yet to make any assessment.

With a predominating population of Chinese race in Hong Kong and the official language is English, unless the Chinese language is used in official communications, the general public may not be able to know the exact intention and policy of Government. There is, furthermore, a vast difference between the structure of the English language and that of the Chinese and unless very skilful and capable translators and interpreters are employed to do the job there will invariably be mistranslation and mis-interpretation.

In the Civil Service there is the grade of translators and interpreters. Prior to 1950 this grade was integrated with the General Clerical Service but in 1951 a new grade was created by the name of translators and interpreters. However, the salaries for the new grade was tied to the General Clerical Service timescale and entry to the grade was open to candidates possessing only School Leaving Certificates.

In 1952 this grade was raised to the grade of Executive Officer, Class II, but the entry requirement was still the School Leaving Certificate standard. When I was a member of the Public Services Commission I suggested the raising of the standard to Matriculation Standard and the proposal was accepted by Government in 1962. The standard of translation and interpretation was therefore greatly improved, particularly in the Law Courts, but there is still room for improvement and indeed complaints have been made from time to time with regard to erroneous translations and interpretations and sometimes these mistakes may be very serious.

A particular group of my Unofficial Colleagues after discussion with the Director of Government Information Services and the Director of Broadcasting suggested that the Establishment Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee might look further into the matter as they came to the conclusion that better translation and interpretation in Government

[Mr Woo] **Translation and Interpretation**

official communications would undoubtedly help to bridge the so-called “communication gap” between Government and the people.

As Chairman of the Establishment Sub-Committee I arranged for an informal discussion with various representatives of Government departments which are directly or closely connected with translations and interpretations of official documents and communications. In discussion it was unanimously agreed: —

First, that in order to attract capable and efficient translators and interpreters the grade in question should be upgraded and should be equated to the Senior Executive Officer, Class II, and eventually to the grade of Senior Executive Officer, Class I, with a maximum salary of \$4,783. The present maximum salary of translators and interpreters, Class I, is only \$3,100 but there is no prospect of promotion, and it cannot therefore attract more suitable and better qualified persons to join this grade.

Secondly, that the title of “translators” and “interpreters” would not give these officers the standing and respect they deserve and it should be re-named as Executive Officers with special duty as translators and/or interpreters.

Thirdly, when these officers reach a certain standard they should be specialized in either translation or interpretation, but in the lower level such as those attached to the Police Force they should perform the duty of both.

Fourthly, there should be in-service training and promotion by qualifying examinations.

It has also been suggested that it is useful if the Universities in Hong Kong and particularly the Chinese University of Hong Kong may establish advanced courses in translation and interpretation.

Sir, it is my view that for better understanding and closer relationship and co-operation between Government and the people the translator and interpreter grade is the keystone to achieve this aim and I strongly urge Government to give serious consideration to the suggestion which I have just outlined.

2.51 p.m.

THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY: —Sir, on the 23rd March 1861, the Governor of Hong Kong, who was then Sir Hercules ROBINSON, addressed the Secretary of State, The Duke of Newcastle, in the following terms: —

“It is my duty to bring to your Grace's notice the great inconvenience which is felt in the Colony from the scarcity

of trustworthy Interpreters through whom the various Departments of Government may communicate with the bulk of the population."

Sir Hercules went on to say that some years earlier, in 1855, it had been laid down as a rule that no application for an increase of salary in the Civil Service was to be made for any person who had not learnt Chinese. These rather severe measures were ineffective and Sir Hercules was obliged to report in 1861 that "there is not an Officer of the Government (Interpreters excepted) who even understands Chinese. The nine or ten Interpreters at present in the employment of the Government have neither education nor sufficient knowledge of the English language to qualify them for their important duties".

I mention this, Sir, in order to indicate that although the importance of effective communication was recognized at a very early stage in the history of the Colony, we have not succeeded in solving this intractable problem with our usual expedition.

Sir Hercules came to the conclusion that part-time study was impractical. "In this enervating climate", he said to the Secretary of State, "six hours drudgery in an office leaves neither mind nor body fitted for that close application which is necessary for acquiring so difficult a language as Chinese".

I suggest, Sir, that the Governor's proposed solution has some relevance to our present problem. His solution was to recruit from the United Kingdom young university graduates, who would be appointed after competitive examination to Hong Kong Cadetships. On arrival in Hong Kong they would study Chinese for two years, then be appointed Interpreters for a number of years, and subsequently be considered for appointment to various posts in the Public Service.

It was thus, Sir, that the Hong Kong Cadet Service (now the Administrative Service) was first established.

Although the scheme, I venture to think, has been of benefit to Hong Kong, it did not succeed in solving the problem of interpretation, since these educated and able young men, fluent in Chinese, proved to be too valuable to be used solely for interpretation; and only one officer was ever so used.

I may mention in passing that the first three to be appointed were Mr W. M. DEANE*, Mr Cecil Clementi SMITH (the uncle of Sir Cecil CLEMENTI†) and Mr M. S. TONNOCHY, whose name is still associated with Tonnochy Road and the Tonnochy Ballroom. (*Laughter*).

* 1890 Hansard, page 3 et seq.

† 1901 Hansard, page 44 et seq.

[THE ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY] **Translation and Interpretation**

I give this background, Sir, in order to show that if one aims too high and sets too high an educational qualification one may still not succeed in recruiting and retaining efficient interpreters. This is already true to some extent, since university graduates amongst our present interpreters tend to seek better prospects by transferring into other branches of the Service. Interpretation may not by itself be an intellectually satisfying occupation for an educated man over a period of years.

Having said all this, Sir, I hasten to add that we have been giving a lot of thought to the problem described by my honourable Friend Mr Woo and to his constructive and helpful suggestions; and I am assured that proposals are now in a final state of preparation.

I am not sure whether Members fully appreciate the extent to which Chinese is already employed in the day-to-day conduct of business. Any member of the public may address to any department a letter in Chinese and it will receive the same attention as if it were written in English. In most cases he will receive a reply in Chinese—although there are certain exceptions affecting some technical subjects. Most Government forms are in both English and Chinese. Press releases and announcements are made in both languages. Important speeches are all translated.

I confess that the standard of Chinese is not always as high as we would wish. It is difficult to translate accurately if one is not very familiar with the technicalities of the subject under discussion. This is particularly true of the translation of technical reports, which are sometimes rather difficult to understand in English. The raising of the educational standard of interpreters will not entirely solve this problem.

Greater progress will be made when we have a sufficient number of senior administrative and professional officers whose mother tongue is Chinese and who can write directly in their own language. In addition, officers from overseas continue to study Chinese, some of them in their own time, without injury to their health, despite the alleged rigours of the climate.

Sir, I am very grateful to Mr Woo and to his Colleagues for their very useful suggestions, and I hope that we shall soon be able to put forward concrete proposals for improving the position.

Question put and agreed to.

NEXT MEETING

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: —Council will accordingly adjourn. The next meeting will be held on 26th February.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes before Three o'clock.